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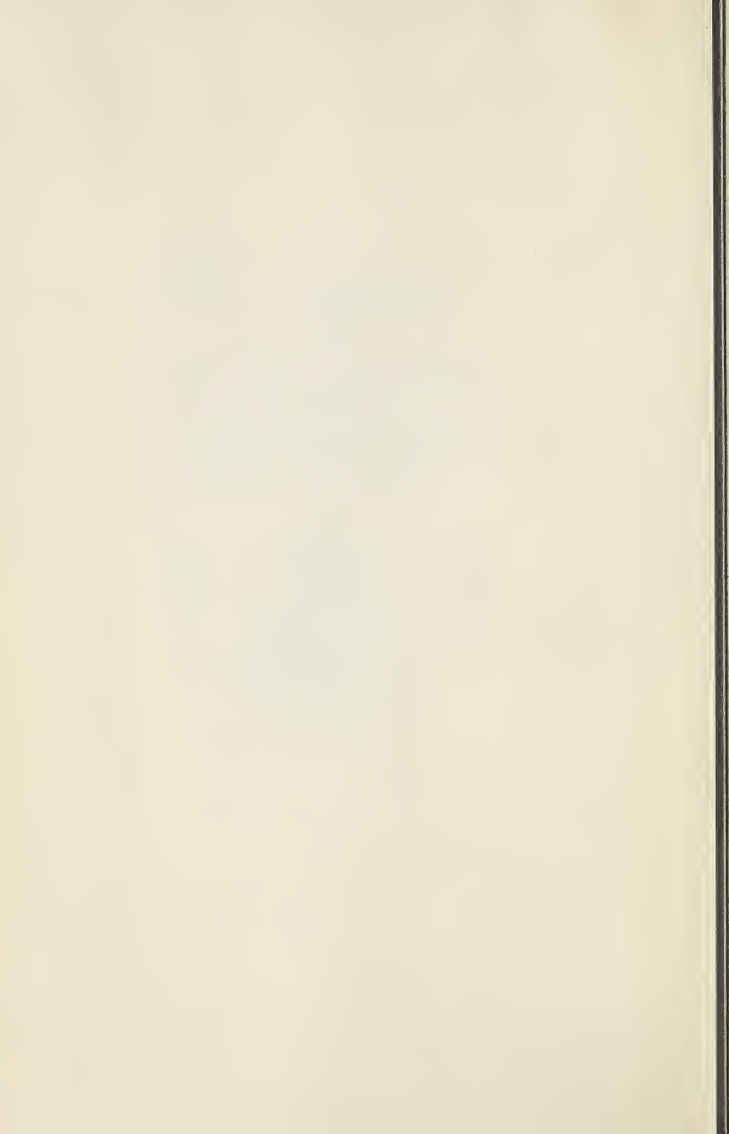
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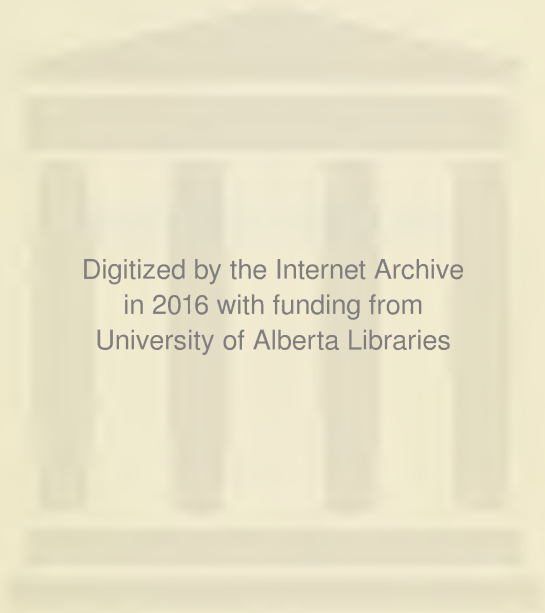






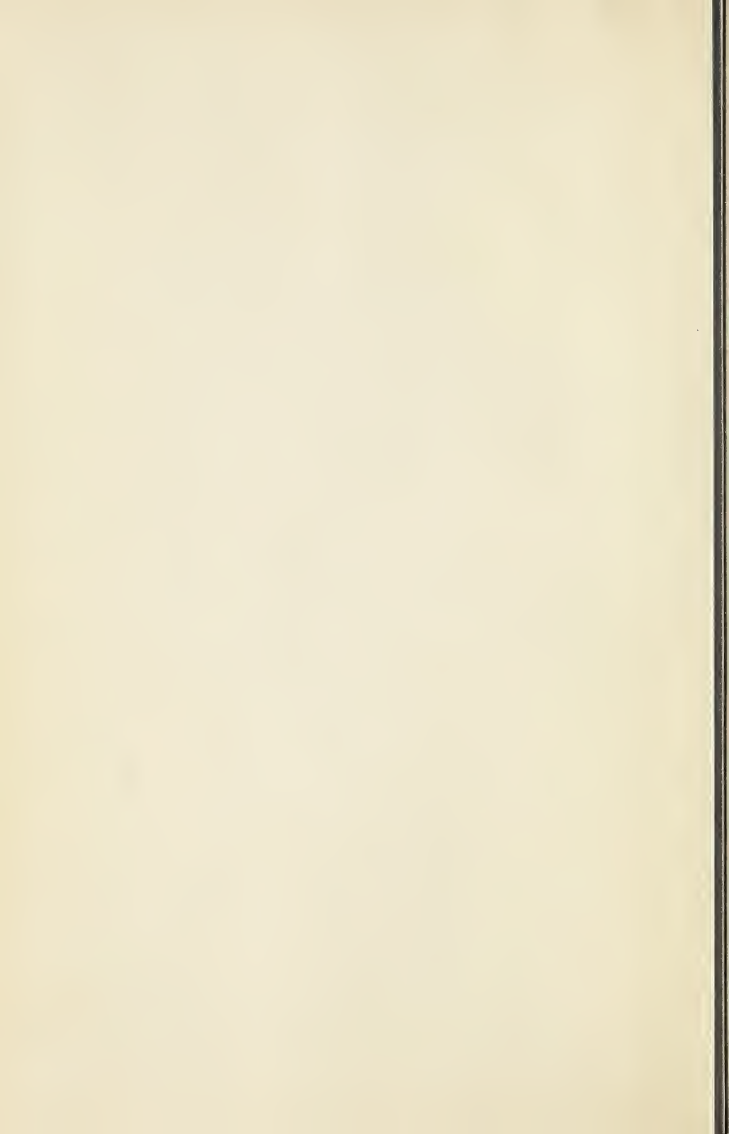






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## DRAMA AND DRAMATICS





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# DRAMA AND DRAMATICS

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A HANDBOOK FOR THE  
HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT

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By

HELEN RANDLE FISH

TEACHER OF DRAMA AND DRAMATICS IN SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1931



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Set up and electrotyped. Published July, 1930.  
Reprinted April, June, 1931.

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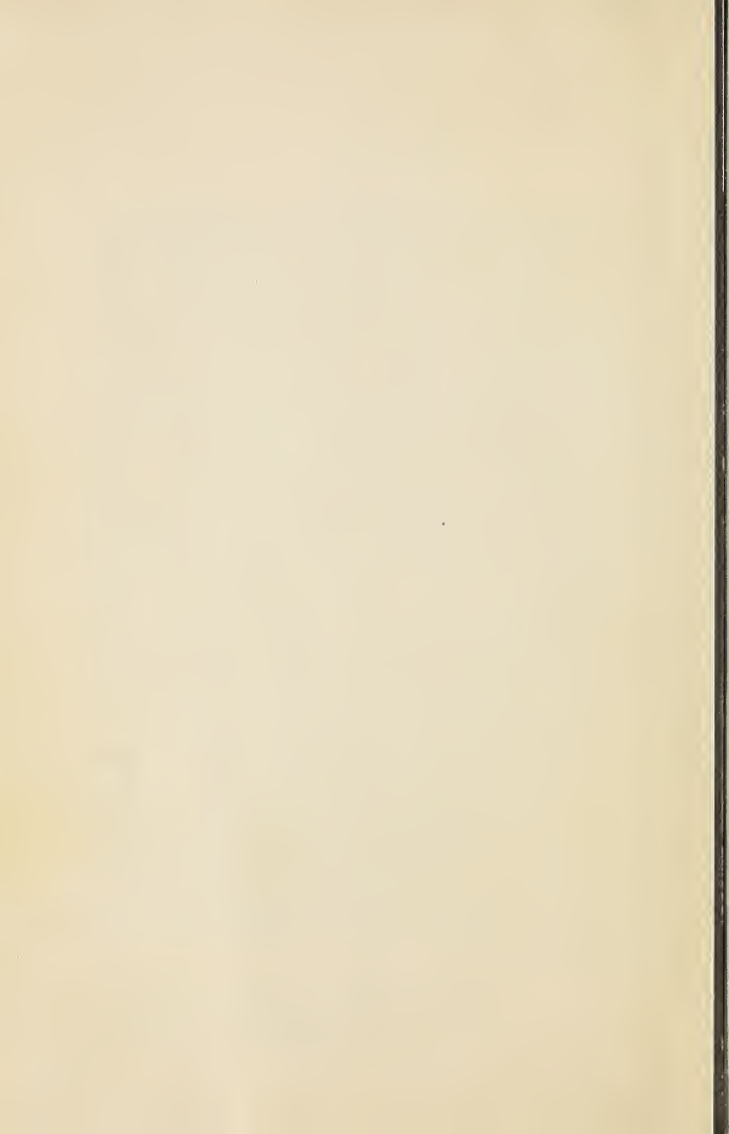


## PREFACE

One evening several years ago I went to a high school to witness a student presentation of *The Yellow Jacket*. My attitude was that of the professional reviewer to whom attendance at an amateur dramatic performance is not from choice but is a necessity of his vocation. This attitude changed almost at once. Within an hour it was evident that the direction of the play had been undertaken by someone who understood amateur production. In tempo, ensemble, setting, and individual characterization it excelled any similar performance of remembrance. Since then choice, not necessity, has taken me time after time to watch the plays at South High School under the direction of Miss Helen R. Fish. Without exception the same standards have obtained in such diverse offerings as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Beggar on Horseback*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The practicality of the principles outlined in the following volume has been proved by their successful application in these high-school presentations. No one questions to-day the importance of dramatic work in schools, both as a means of educating future audiences to an appreciation of a play and as a mode of self-expression. This book should be a stimulus to the pursuit of such study. From the viewpoint of a dramatic critic, who believes a knowledge of the drama to be worthy of the same consideration given other subjects of study, I heartily commend it to its readers.

CARLTON MILES, Dramatic Editor,  
*The Minneapolis Journal*







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## FOREWORD

To the Teacher:

The subject matter of this book is the material of the course followed in my classes for the last ten years. Every exercise has been assigned in the classroom. Every question has been discussed. The principles involved have been arrived at in the laboratory of classroom and high-school stage.

The one-act plays are for use as project work, in reading, and especially in acting. Their discussion as drama is to be taken up in connection with the chapters on Reading a Play. The plays are assigned for reading in the question lists, a reading outline is given, and continual reference is made to them in the text. It is better to postpone rehearsals until after Chapter XII. They may, however, be in preparation after Chapter VI, the chapters in Voice, Diction, and Stagecraft being taken up simultaneously with the preparation of the plays. They should on no account be rehearsed before completing Chapter VI.

The questions and projects at the end of each chapter are an essential part of the chapter, and all or most of them should be assigned. Those that require a wider reading than the majority of students have been doing, will be found separate from the others. They are suggestive to the few who have already developed an interest in reading plays, and perhaps stimulative to others. These questions may be assigned as special topics, or omitted altogether at the discretion of the teacher.

In schools where library facilities are limited, the illus-



trative material in the one-act plays will be found sufficient. Other illustrations are drawn largely from Shakespeare, not only because Shakespeare has a way of being inevitable, but because his plays are always accessible.

These chapters are purposely informal. If there is any impression the book wishes particularly to avoid it is that of attempting to concentrate sets of rules and offering them to students like drama malted-milk tablets or bouillon cubes. Acting, playwriting, and criticism are arts, and art refuses to be put up in cans; it is too living a thing. It must always be bursting its bonds, as it seeks new forms and expands with new life.

One cannot become an artist by learning a set of rules, and if one could, this book makes no splendid pretensions of being a handbook for artists. Acting, playwriting, and dramatic criticism in high schools are valuable to the student as educational projects, not as training for actors, playwrights, or dramatic critics. The few fundamentals touched on here serve to interest students in the drama as a form of literature, and in a more intelligent appreciation of the theatre. They serve also to stimulate a desire to see better plays, and to produce better plays, in a less slipshod method and in a more humble and sincere spirit than is sometimes found in amateur productions.

These things are educationally valuable. If there be any in our classes who can go beyond these elementary principles to something finer and more elusive, let us be grateful.

Most grateful acknowledgment is due the kind and helpful criticism of the writer's friends: Mr. Willis West, Mr. Carlton Miles formerly of the *Minneapolis Journal*, Mr. John Seaman Garns of the McPhail School of Minneapolis,



Miss Anne Dudley Blitz, Miss Agnes Louise Dean, Miss Zoe Comer, Mr. Dean Jensen, Dr. Charles Hutchinson. Also to Mr. Joseph Jorgens, principal of the South High School of Minneapolis, under whose kindly auspices the experiments in this book have been performed; to Miss Rose M. Muckley, who has assisted in coaching many plays; and to Mr. H. H. Raymond, who has made the staging of the plays possible.

For the use of the scene from *The Yellow Jacket* the author wishes to thank Mr. and Mrs. Coburn, and for the three character studies, Mr. Anthony Karnagel. Mr. Ralph Smalley of Mechanic Arts High School kindly made plans and sketches, and Mr. Staadt of the University of Minnesota granted the use of the scene from *Episode on a Waterfront*.

Further acknowledgment for courteous permission to reprint plays and selections is gratefully given to the following authors and publishers:

To Lord Dunsany and G. P. Putnam's Sons for *A Night at an Inn*;

To Anton Chekov and Charles Scribner's Sons for *The Proposal*;

To Stark Young for *The Twilight Saint*;

To Merrill Denison and The Macmillan Company of Canada, Limited, for *The Weather Breeder*;

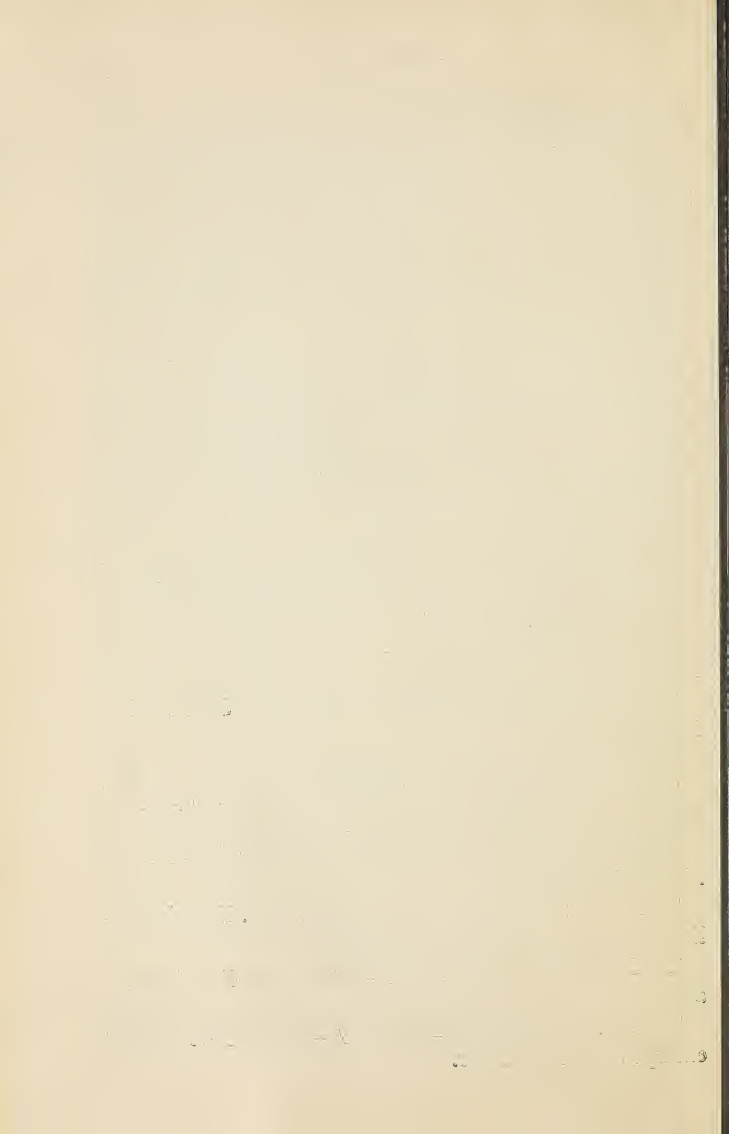
To Louise Saunders and Charles Scribner's Sons for *The Knave of Hearts*;

To Edward Knoblock and the Samuel W. French Publishing Company for *My Lady's Rose*;

To Carl Sandburg and Henry Holt Company for "Fog"; and

To J. P. McEvoy and The Reilly Lee Company for the excerpt from *The Potters*.



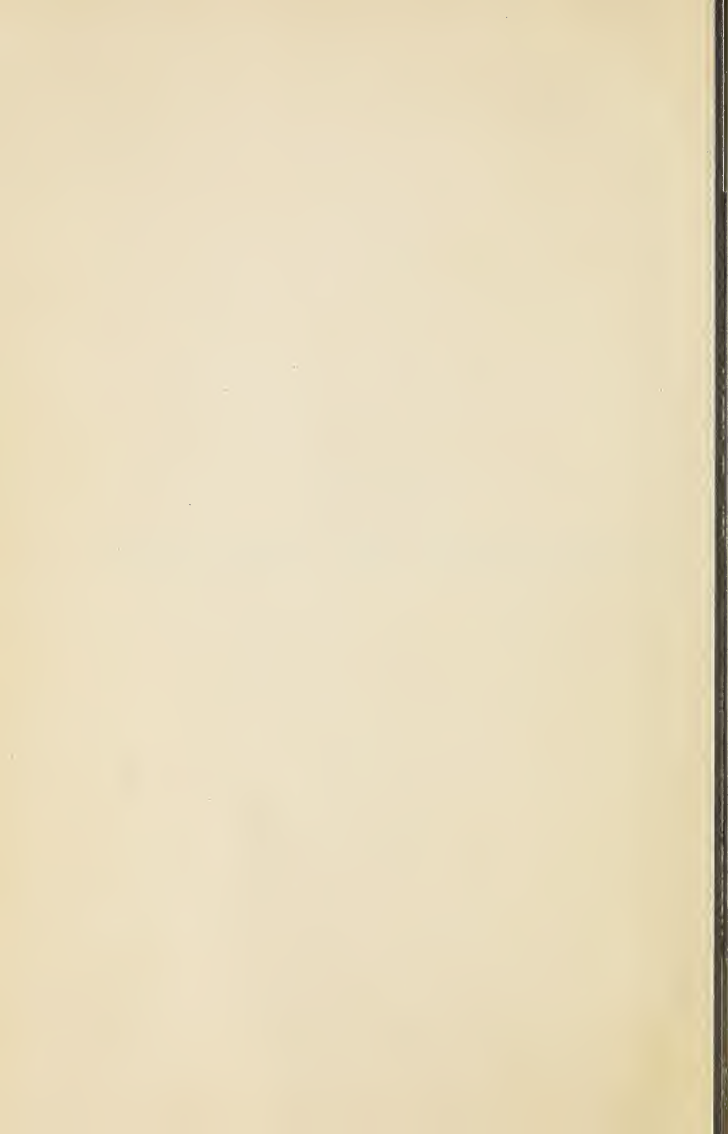




PART ONE

READING, SEEING, AND ACTING A PLAY







# DRAMA AND DRAMATICS

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE VALUE OF DRAMATICS

"We bow."

Note the title of the book: *Drama and Dramatics*. And note the title of the chapter: *The Value of Dramatics*. What is the difference between drama and dramatics? And has drama no value?

By drama we mean the study of plays as we read them or see them. By dramatics we mean the study of plays through acting them.

Now about the value of drama. Not many years ago, a book on drama intended for high school students would have been prefaced with a sort of apology. Various reasons would have been given why the study of drama might be valuable for young persons. It is not necessary to rehearse these reasons to-day. Such tremendous interest has been evinced in the drama during the last ten years, so many books have been written on the subject for persons of all ages, that drama is taken for granted. Students who once thought Pinero was a comic opera, now go to see *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, and say with a yawn, "How old-fashioned!" Few people to-day question that it is profitable to spend a bit of the high school course in learning the difference between a good and a bad play, since that difference is quite as important as that between a good book and



a bad one. No one to-day questions that the drama is an important branch of literature, and that although

“Marlowe is dead and Greene is in his grave,  
And sweet Will Shakespeare long ago is gone,”

much good and some great dramatic writing has been done since 1616.

† The value of dramatics is also largely taken for granted, but we are not nearly so clear in our minds just what that value may be. Plays are still being produced in high schools “for fun,” with no knowledge of acting or play production. Hence the purpose of this volume is not only to give the student an idea of some of the principles on which plays are made and by which they may be judged, together with some examples of one-act plays, but to serve as a textbook for amateur acting.

The value of dramatics, of amateur acting, lies in its educational value to the actors, not in the pleasure it gives the audience. That indeed is another story!

These are some of the reasons for considering with you the art of acting, which is so fine an art that the amateur can scarcely hope to learn its A B C's. We who are amateurs, and wisely intend to remain so; we who are going to be teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, salesmen, housewives, executives, or what newspapers have been known to call “society's brightest jewels,” — what besides fun shall we gain by acting these plays instead of merely reading them?

No matter what your job or sphere in life may be, you will need the following qualifications, and these a study of acting will give you.

✓ First, poise — the ability to enter a room and remain in it without feeling that your arms and legs are insecurely



fastened, and that your clothes are wrong. This is a valuable asset in any walk of life, and nothing, except being born a duke, gives it so quickly and effectively as appearance on the stage. In fact, amateur actors have frequently been criticized for a tendency in the opposite direction. Just a thought too much poise, as it were! One should, perhaps, beware of this.

Second, voice training. You all know how valuable is a pleasant well-modulated voice. For the irritation sometimes set up between teacher and student, nurse and patient, salesman and customer, or two persons newly introduced, a rasping, strident, or inaudible voice is often responsible. And with voice training goes practice in correct diction. The "doncha's," the "hafta's," the "wotta's" of common American speech have no place, except when deliberately assumed for certain effects, upon the stage. Bad as it sometimes is, stage English is probably the purest spoken in America.

Third, and this point dramatics shares with athletics and some other school activities, the spirit of coöperation. One learns in a play what he does not learn in public speaking or reading, the idea of teamwork. A play does not depend upon one person, but upon everybody concerned. It may be wrecked (and often is) by one of the minor characters; just as the crowd or ensemble may easily be (and often is) one of the best features of a play. The "lead" must give way to the servant who comes in to announce, "My lord, the carriage waits." The clown must keep himself in the background when Lady Tragedy enters. The star must bow to the director, and the director must stand out of the way of the scene-shifters. Each person gives another a cue, and himself takes his from another. Then, too, when many



people are working together on costumes, settings, production, the presentation of a play becomes an important community affair.

Fourth, a knowledge of human nature. There is no job, except a hermit's, where a knowledge of people is not of vital importance. The relation between employer and employee, between teacher and student, between the business man and his public, between parents and children, depends upon it, and one of the best ways to acquire it is by the study of character, motives, and emotions, which is the foundation of all acting. To put yourself into Rosalind's place, to think her thoughts, to experience through the imagination her emotions, to act from her motives is to understand Rosalind, and to understand Rosalind on the stage is to understand many Rosalindish qualities off the stage.

Fifth, acting with its character study enriches life. Nearest to life of all the arts, it gives one a sense of the pageant of human affairs, of the comedy and tragedy of human existence. Life, so it seems, can never be drab nor uninteresting to the actor who is able to bridge the space from the play world to the real world; for he has around him, in every shop, in every street, in every family, scenes and characters in that greatest of plays, the drama of human existence which we call life. If you knew and understood all the emotions and "situations" crowded into this or any other classroom, you could out-write Shakespeare. Is it not interesting to speculate what they are?

And now the play's the thing!



## QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. What is the difference between drama and dramatics?
- \* 2. By reference to current newspapers and magazines prove a widespread interest in drama.
3. Why is the study of drama valuable?
4. Can you mention offhand some of the most notable dramatists since 1616? This question will be asked again at the close of the book with the word "offhand" omitted. In the meantime there are *Chief Contemporary Dramatists* by Dickinson, Barrett Clark's *British and Continental Drama*, Oliver Sayler's *Our American Theatre*.
5. Who is Pinero? What is his best-known play?
6. What advantages are there in studying dramatics? Illustrate each point with examples of your own. Think of other points. Can you find an allusion to Hamlet's advice to the players in point 3 (page 5)?
7. Do you know about any famous community plays? What is a pageant? If your community has given one, discuss it.
8. Look up the word "ensemble" in the dictionary. What would be an "ensemble scene" in a play? Are there any in *Julius Cæsar*?
9. Must a person have actual experience of all the emotions of a character in order to understand the character?
- \* 10. Discuss some of the advantages of a pleasant voice.
11. For what purpose is bad diction assumed on the stage?
12. Does your experience lead you to agree with the last sentence under point 3 (page 5)? Do you agree with the second under point 5 (page 6)?
13. Illustrate "the pageant of human affairs," the "comedy and tragedy of human existence" mentioned in the foregoing chapter by writing a theme on *Our Family Comedy*, *Little Tragedies of the Schoolroom*, or *An Hour in a Railway Station*, or *The Pageant of the Avenue*.

*Note.*

Do not expect to find answers to all questions in this book in the chapters themselves. Sometimes the answer will be found in the chapter; sometimes it will be suggested there. Often the question is one for thought and discussion, as question 9; sometimes, for investi-



gation, as number 7. If your library facilities are limited, some of the questions will have to be omitted. Illustrative material cannot always be drawn from plays familiar to everybody. If no one in the class has read or seen a play that is mentioned, that play may be assigned as a special topic; or if the play is not readily obtainable, the question may be omitted. For instance, it is not essential that you should know who Pinero is; but, since you profess an interest in the drama, it is well to know a name as conspicuous as his; a few moments with the encyclopedia will give you the answer to question 5. Question 6 is not essential; still Hamlet's advice to the players (Act III, Scene ii) contains much matter! And it is the hope of the author of this text that if you have not read *Hamlet*, you may be influenced to do so. When questions on the one-act plays included in the book occur, they should, of course, be answered by the entire class.



## CHAPTER TWO

### READING A PLAY: ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

BOTTOM. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Suppose we divide our course, like all Gaul, into three parts: Reading, Acting, and Seeing a Play. We must remember that these three divisions are not distinct; but that they overlap and are interdependent. For instance, one cannot properly see a play or act a play until one has learned to read a play. Nor can one read a play intelligently until one can see it in his mind's eye. And the completeness of this vision is immensely enlarged by having acted the play, even amateurishly. So that the things which are said about reading a play, we must use again in seeing or acting. We might begin with reading a play, a less expensive form of diversion than going to the theatre, and easier than acting.

It is here that someone will ask that dreaded question, What is a play? One of the foremost critics of America assures us that he has spent some twenty years in trying to answer this question satisfactorily, and so far with no results. It sounds easy enough: a play is a story capable of being acted.

But what makes a story capable of being acted? Aye, there's the rub! Well, since this chapter cannot be twenty years long, we shall have to throw you the above inadequate



definition, a play is a story capable of being acted. It is the best we can do.

But we can try to simplify your difficulties by suggesting that there are two essentials of drama, *action* and *emotion*.

We speak of a dramatic story, scene, or occurrence. We mean one that has action and emotion. To illustrate: the scene in your schoolroom is probably at this moment undramatic. You and the other students are quiet; you may have recently been very active, perhaps even distressingly so; but if you are now reading these words you must be in a state of comparative quiet. This chapter arouses in you no particular emotion. But suppose, as you turn the page, you were to find a one-thousand-dollar bill! With your name and address on it! All would be changed. Action and emotion would be introduced into the scene.

You would announce your discovery. Other students would crowd around you, various emotions would be generated — surprise, excitement, envy, joy! There would be drama. And the intensity of the drama would depend on the intensity of the emotion. A person who needed the money for a cherished purpose would give the scene much more dramatic value than one who had plenty of currency at home in the bureau drawer. If, when the bill was discovered, somebody in the room were moved to feelings of jealousy, and should resolve, like the villain of melodrama, to thwart the plans of the hero, then more emotion would be introduced and the dramatic value of the scene increased.

There is something dramatic in mere action, if, indeed, action can be considered apart from emotion. Suppose, for example, that without any particular feeling, you were looking on at a match, a crowd, a storm. But when the match is between personal foes, like the fencing match in *Hamlet*;



when the crowd is roused to fury like a mob in *Julius Cæsar*; and the storm is emotional as well as actual, like the storm in *King Lear*, then you have real drama. One reason for the curious fascination war holds for humanity is that there you have great drama — action and emotion at its highest pitch.

All drama has an element of conflict, that is, the opposing of two forces. It may be a conflict between good and evil, love and jealousy, life and death. Or it may be a duel of two personalities, of a man's fight with circumstances, with temptation, with his own character. The theme of the Greek drama was the never-ending conflict of man with fate.

Contrast is always dramatic, and contrast is a form of conflict. Even two contrasting colors — white against black, a brilliant red, orange, or blue against a neutral background — arouses in us a much stronger sensation than two shades of the same color. In the same way, poverty is more striking in contrast with riches, sorrow with joy, good with evil.

Almost all drama contains the element of surprise, because surprise is an accompaniment of emotion, and because action is likely to result in surprise. When, a few minutes ago, you found the thousand-dollar bill in this textbook, the drama lay partly in the surprise that accompanied your excitement. If you were accustomed to finding thousand-dollar bills in your textbooks, there would have been no drama; for no emotion would have been aroused and no action would have taken place. You would have simply said, "Here's another of those things," and pocketed it quietly.

In Hamlet's first interview with the ghost both he and



the audience have been carefully prepared for its appearance, and the element of surprise is not great; the tensivity of the scene depending on the tensivity of emotion. But when the ghost appears the second time in the scene in the queen's chamber, there has been no preparation for its appearance, and the drama is greatly heightened by the element of surprise.

In Marc Antony's speech over the body of Cæsar, note that we are well prepared for the final outbreak of the mob; yet the element of surprise is not lacking in the speech, particularly when Antony produces the will, and when he lifts Cæsar's mantle and shows the wounds made by the daggers of the conspirators.

Suspense is also an element of drama. If the rest of the students had seen your bill placed in this book by some affluent person, and if they were watching you as you turned page after page until you came to the money, their suspense would add drama to the situation.<sup>1</sup>

One of the reasons why a trial is almost invariably dramatic is the presence of the element of suspense. Even if the guilt or innocence of the accused seems fairly well established at the beginning of the trial, there is always the possibility that new and startling evidence may be introduced (here you have surprise again) and so change the verdict. Even if nothing unforeseen occurs, there is always suspense in waiting for the decision of a jury.

You all know how mystery plays make use of suspense. In such plays as *The Bat* and *The Cat and the Canary*, and *Dracula* suspense is carried to such a degree that the audience is excited almost to hysteria.

<sup>1</sup>Note that while the second ghost scene in *Hamlet* is built on surprise, the first is founded on suspense.



The essentials of drama are, then, action and emotion, to which may be added conflict, surprise, and suspense. *and contrast.*

## QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Read *A Night at an Inn* on page 155 of this book and point out in it the essentials of drama.
2. Mention dramatic scenes from well-known novels and discuss their drama.
3. Find in to-day's newspaper the day's most dramatic events. Discuss their dramatic qualities. Do they contain surprise, suspense, conflict? Bring clippings to class.
4. Find, in the newspaper, paragraphs which merely suggest drama — bits, perhaps, from the lost and found section, or business opportunities.
5. Find examples of dramatic contrast in stories, situations in plays or in life. If possible find one in to-day's newspaper.
6. What athletic games offer all the elements of drama? What games are most dramatic? What least dramatic?
7. Have you read *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? It is light, airy; its plot is very slight: is there any element of conflict here? If you have not read it, try to think of another play whose plot is slight — a musical comedy, perhaps, and examine its plot to see if it contains conflict.
8. Might there be drama in an absolutely quiet scene? Two people sitting quietly at a table, for instance? If so, how do you account for lack of action? If you have access to Strindberg's one-act play, *The Stronger*, read it. It affords an answer to this question. You can find it in a volume of *Contemporary One-Act Plays* edited by B. Roland Lewis. What do you think about a chess game? Is it *essentially* dramatic, or could it be made dramatic?
9. In preparation for the next chapter, read *My Lady's Rose*, page 222.



## CHAPTER THREE

### READING A PLAY: KINDS OF DRAMA

THESEUS. The best in this kind are but shadows.

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Drama, like everything else in the world, except electrons, can be subdivided. And, as in everything else, we must be careful when making our divisions, about drawing lines too sharply. For different sorts of drama are likely to be found in one play, blended so that we have tragi-comedies and farce comedies and melodramatic farces, and many plays which stubbornly refuse to be classified at all.

As you have guessed, if you were thinking as you read the last sentence, four classes of drama are ordinarily given: farce, comedy, melodrama, and tragedy.

With farce you are probably most familiar. A *farce* is a humorous play in which the humor is exaggerated or ridiculous, depending for the most part on the situations in which the characters are involved, rather than on the characters themselves. Examples of such characters will readily occur to you: Charley's Aunt, a venerable but still remarkably lively lady, the Nervous Wreck, the Man Who Married a Dumb Wife. In the films the so-called comedy is almost invariably farce. The comedies of Harold Lloyd, Charles Chaplin, and Harry Langdon are farces, because their humor is exaggerated, and because their fun lies in the ridiculous situations into which the characters get themselves. It does not so much matter, for instance,



*who* sits in a custard pie. *Anybody* sitting in a custard pie is ridiculous.

*Comedy* is also a humorous form of play. That is, the author always intends it to be humorous. Unlike farce, however, it makes direct contact with real life. Its chief interest lies in the characters rather than in the action. It makes fun, gaily or bitterly, of human nature, with its weaknesses, its curious little ways, beliefs, and customs.

To return to our illustration of the custard pie. It is farce, as we have just said, because it is ridiculous in itself. But suppose we introduce character. Suppose the gentleman who sits in the pie to be a very dignified and pompous personage who thinks well of himself. By contrast, then, it is funnier to see him decorated with custard than to see a happy-go-lucky boy in the same situation. Now we have comedy, because we have humor of character as well as humor of situation. Suppose, again, that people in general had a propensity for sitting in pies without knowing it; or suppose they were rather proud of doing so, without having any idea that they were behaving foolishly. Again we would have comedy; for human nature would be shown as weak and absurd.

So Lady Gregory in *Spreading the News* makes gentle fun of the human propensity to gossip; Clare Kummer in *Rollo's Wild Oat*, of the universal and unfortunate desire to be a great actor; Kaufman and Connelly in *Beggar on Horseback*, of the modern commercialization of art; George Bernard Shaw in *Arms and the Man*, of the romantic idea of war.

Comedy may have a serious, even reformatory purpose as long as it retains its comic spirit, its humorous point of view. The comedies of Molière, the great French writer of comedies, are of this sort. In them he indulges in bitter



satire against the medical profession, against hypocrites of the church, against women who pretend to be intellectual. Comedy is often founded on a serious situation, the humor depending on the author's treatment of the situation, or the way in which the characters themselves regard it. Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew* takes the situation of a man married to a shrewish wife. Now that is no joke: Lewis Beach shows the tragedy of it in *A Square Peg*. But Shakespeare treats it, and makes the husband take it, as a huge joke. *What Price Glory* may, if you wish, be taken as a serious indictment against war, but it is done almost entirely in the comic spirit.

You will see how *The Weather Breeder* on page 170 might have served for a tragedy: a grumbling father, a hard-working daughter, a damaged crop. Instead, although some of the underlying tragedy of situation comes across, we find ourselves laughing at "Paw's" absurd pleasure in being right at all costs.

Comedy, then, may be serious as long as it is also humorous. Do not be misled by the misuse of the term "comedy" in the films.

*Melodrama*, like farce, depends on its incidents or situations. These, however, are not supposed to be funny; but are exciting, sensational, thrilling. Murders, robberies, fires, earthquakes, railway accidents, elopements, these are the material of melodrama.

The films deal largely with melodrama; because melodrama, consisting so fully of action, photographs well. *The Bat*, *The Cat and the Canary*, *The Phantom of the Opera* are well-known examples of melodrama.

Melodrama, unlike tragedy, usually ends well. The old-fashioned melodrama ran to standard types of character



and standard situations. You can see them in *'Way Down East*: the black-browed villain (a city man); the strong, silent hero (a country boy); the sweet and too-confiding heroine (blue-eyed and languishing); the irate father (softened in the last act); and the old-maid aunt, the absent-minded professor, the fat and fatuous hired man. The incidents were usually an elopement, stolen jewels, lost "cheild," erring daughter, missing will, and the mortgage on the old farm.

Modern melodrama is often very different stuff, including such clear-cut writing as Galsworthy's *Loyalties*, and Lord Dunsany's *A Night at an Inn*. New or old, however, melodrama depends on thrills and sensations. While the best melodrama does not despise careful delineation of character, its greatest interest lies in situation outside of character: the theft, the murder, the accident, the duel, the battle.

It is possible that your ideas of tragedy may be colored by melodrama, as those of comedy are often exaggerated by farce. A *tragedy* is a serious play with an unhappy ending. An unhappy ending may not mean death. Many tragedies do not end in death, either in life or on the stage, and in the great tragedies where death has occurred it is often merely an incident. Death in *Romeo and Juliet* is for the lovers a great tragedy; but Macbeth died many times before he met Macduff on the battlefield, and all that made life worth living for Hamlet was gone before Laertes touched him with the poisoned foil.

The thing that matters in a great tragedy is not what we see with our eyes — the murder or the accident; but what we see with our minds, the inner conflict, the play of motives, the clash of emotions rather than of swords; failure, disillusionment, defeat.



You are doubtless tired of classifications, but as you know, writers of textbooks have a passion for classifying everything. It is often a useful habit, if not overworked. Here is another classification of drama, which like the first, must not be driven too hard; for it will not go everywhere.

Plays may be naturalistic, romantic, or symbolistic, according to the author's method of treatment.

In a *naturalistic* play the author endeavors to set before us a representation of life as he sees it. He refuses to select the high spots or to color the low ones. If life is dull, commonplace, sordid, or unbearable, very well; let his play represent it as dull, commonplace, sordid, or unbearable. His method is the method of the photographer, who having once chosen the scene he wants to photograph, presses the button, and shows us the uncompromising result. Like a photographer, however, he often groups his subjects, arranges the light, retouches the proof, and selects the tone and finish of the picture. The more skillful he is at photography, the more his method approaches the method of the painter.

To illustrate: the method in *My Lady's Rose* is the naturalistic one. The author shows us a dingy, poverty-stricken room, overworked girls, a crude young man, constant haggling over money, borrowing from neighbors, scrappy meals. But using his privilege as a photographer, Knoblock selects a moment of especial interest, a moment of emotional significance which gives us a humble but real little tragedy. On the other hand, Stark Young in *The Twilight Saint* chooses the method of the romanticist. The same story might be told in a setting like that of *My Lady's Rose*, the characters might be much cruder personalities, whom poverty, sickness and failure have made nagging, bitter and



coarse. But in *The Twilight Saint* we have a background of romantic medieval Italy; the characters, a poet, a lovely girl, a saint.

The *romantic* writer has the painter's method. He shows life in its more idealized and highly-colored aspects, which may, however, be quite as true as the grimmer and greyer photographic representations of naturalism. There are certainly moments in a love affair when balconies and moonlight do not figure, and yet *Romeo and Juliet* is greatly, universally true. Shakespeare does not draw the character of Julius Cæsar with anything like historic accuracy; yet the play is true in the deepest sense. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is painted in far gayer colors than our everyday existence; but it makes clear that life is not all an affair of bread and butter and the rent. In every heart is a love of adventure and a secret longing to be a "pirut."

In fact, what both the naturalistic writer and the romantic are trying to do is to be *realists*; that is, to get at the truth underlying life. It does not matter whether the scene be set in a poor little living room, or in the castle of Macbeth. We may be equally interested in the characters, in their weaknesses, their failures, their mistakes. One writer may make us laugh, another may make us weep. One may show us what looks like a snapshot of a familiar room; another, what resembles a painting of a medieval castle. Both aim to be *realistic* and present the truth about life.

Now as no two persons see the same thing in the same way, and as our understanding of human emotions is after all limited, both naturalist and romanticist often fail to present this truth. The naturalist sometimes becomes more interested in the kitchen sink and the price of butter than he is in his people. The romanticist sometimes likes the



pretty colors that he is putting into his picture better than the outlines of character. Then realism is lost, and we begin to feel that there is nothing in life but kitchen sinks or pretty colors. Zona Gale's one-act play, *Neighbors*, might be taken as an example of the sacrifice of truth to naturalism: it is so utterly natural that it has no dramatic interest whatever. *If I Were King*, by Justin Huntly McCarthy, sacrifices the truth to romanticism. It is scarcely possible that a waif like François Villon (you meet him in the films as *The Beloved Rogue*) would, if raised to the king's place, be able to save France; but it makes a good romance.

The third class of plays — for realism may be said to be divided into the two classes of naturalism and romanticism — is the *symbolistic* type of play. In a symbolistic play the characters are symbols. That is, they represent ideas rather than persons. Such a play is *The Bluebird*. A glance at the cast of characters will show you what I mean: Fire, Water, Sugar, Bread, Light, The Dog, The Cat, The Great Joys, The Luxuries. The old morality plays were symbolistic plays.

In some plays the characters are symbols, although bearing the names of real persons. Peer Gynt, for instance, in Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt*, stands for romantic, impractical humanity,<sup>1</sup> Solveig, for Love and Womanliness, the Green Clad Woman, for Evil.

Symbolism is often employed in a play not really symbolistic. The three witches in *Macbeth* symbolize Macbeth's evil thoughts.

There are other classifications, which shade off into various hair-splitting divisions; but the methods which I have

<sup>1</sup>It is true that Ibsen intended Peer to represent the Norwegian people, but the character grew beyond his intention and became universal.



tried to explain: naturalism, romanticism, both of which are forms of realism, and symbolism include by far the greater number of plays. Some authors use the terms naturalism and realism interchangeably. But when did authors agree?

### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. In to-day's newspaper what events predominate: comedy, tragedy, melodrama or farce? Discuss.

2. Take for your situation this: There came a knock at the door. From it outline roughly in a paragraph each, the plot of an original comedy, tragedy, melodrama, farce.

3. Classify all the plays you can think of as comedies, tragedies, etc. Under what head do movie "serials" come?

4. Give the difference between farce and comedy. Between tragedy and melodrama.

5. Give the difference between naturalism and romanticism. Give plays that are examples of each method. Which point of view do you prefer, and why? Which is more modern in spirit?

6. What do you understand by realism?

7. Does the term "romance" include only the love theme? Prove your statement by illustrations.

8. Since real life contains thrills and sensational episodes, recent feats in aviation being a case in point, what is the matter with the so-called dime novel and the sensational movie? Why should a pirate story like *Treasure Island*, or a love play like *Romeo and Juliet*, be called great literature, when the "dime" novel and movie serial are frowned upon?

9. Write a theme on "Life — a Comedy or Tragedy?"

10. Read *The Proposal* on page 193, and *The Weather Breeder*, page 170. Show why one is farce, the other comedy. Show how the tragedy in *My Lady's Rose* (p. 222) is the tragedy of the commonplace without melodrama. It does not end in death.

11. The following questions may be answered by students who have had a course in Shakespeare. Find examples of melodrama in Shakespeare's plays. Discuss the melodrama in *Macbeth*. Is this pure melodrama? Is *The Taming of the Shrew* a pure farce? How do you



classify *The Merchant of Venice*? What farce is there in *Twelfth Night*? Of which class is *The Comedy of Errors*? What is Shakespeare's point of view — naturalistic, romantic, or symbolic?

12. The following questions may prove suggestive to those students who have some familiarity with more modern plays. What and why is *Abie's Irish Rose*? At what time-honored institution does Booth Tarkington laugh in *Clarence*? At whom does he laugh in *Seventeen*? What weakness of masculine nature is made fun of in Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*? What is the point of view in *Peter Pan* — naturalistic? romantic? symbolic? What is Ibsen's point of view? Eugene O'Neill's? How would you classify *Cradle Song*? *Coquette*?



## CHAPTER FOUR

### READING A PLAY: THE MAKE-UP OF A PLAY

"You will not write good dramatic dialog on a week-end trip. You must listen to men and women. You must listen with the ear and the heart and the mind."

—Ludwig Lewisohn in *The Creative Life*.

Every play must have a plot, characters, and dialog. The plot is the story, growing out of a combination of circumstances known as the situation. The characters are, of course, the people who live in the story, and the dialog the lines which they speak.

A play must take place somewhere. That is, it must have a setting. And it may also have a theme. The theme is not the story, nor the subject; but the idea around which the play is built. The theme of *The Bluebird* is, "One may find happiness at home." Of Galsworthy's *Justice*: "Is the present penal system just?" Of *Dulcie*: "Don't marry a dumb-bell."

Sometimes the theme is of paramount interest to the author, and he writes the play solely that he may "get across" his theme to his audience. Such plays are often called problem plays or propaganda plays. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is — or was — a problem play. An ancient but honorable example of the propaganda play is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, whose story has outlived its theme.

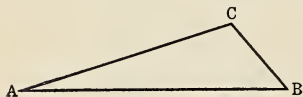
In many instances the theme is secondary. You can plainly deduce a theme from *Macbeth*, but you are more



interested in Macbeth and what happened to him than in any thoughts on the fatal effect of yielding to the corrupting influences of ambition. And it is evident that Shakespeare himself is also more interested in the man Macbeth. You will find a theme in *A Night at an Inn*; but you will care far more about the story and the characters. The theme of *The Twilight Saint* on page 211 is perhaps more strongly stressed; but in neither play is the theme forced upon the audience. On the other hand if you were to read *Back to Methusaleh*, a play of George Bernard Shaw's, you would know at once that Shaw has built his entire play around the theme of a longer life for the human race. You would discover that the characters are but mouthpieces for this theme, and that there is no story.

We return to plot, character, dialog, which are to drama what the famous "three R's" are to the school system.

The plot of a play, like that of a story, is generally represented graphically by a triangle.



*A* for the introduction or exposition. *A-C* for the rising action or development of the plot. *C* for the climax or highest point of suspense. *C-B* for the falling action or dénouement. *B* for the ending or catastrophe.

Let us have a brief explanation of terms.

The *introduction* of a play, unlike introductions off the stage, gives the facts of the story with which we should already be acquainted — the circumstances that have happened before we met the characters. A hostess in introducing her friend, Mrs. X, cannot well say, "She is wretchedly poor," or "Her uncle has just left her a million dollars,



which she is spending very extravagantly," or "She is very generous, but she is an awful liar." That, however, is what the playwright does in the first part of his play: gives us the situation and something of the characters. For instance, in the first few speeches of *The Twilight Saint*, we learn that Lisetta has been ill a year; that Guido is restless, unhappy, impatient at his poverty and his duties as a nurse, his failure as a poet; that Pia is a kindly old neighbor-woman without much understanding of the situation; that a rival poet has recently been honored by the Duke.

Some writers add to the parts of a play an *inciting crisis*: the event which early in the play gives spur to the action — the punt, so to speak, which sends the ball up the field to the goal-posts; the incident without which there could have been no play. For instance, if Romeo and Juliet had never met, there could have been no fatal love story; hence, the meeting of the two young people at the masked ball is the inciting crisis of the play. In *Julius Cæsar*, it is necessary that the conspirators be especially incensed against Cæsar in order that they may plot against him. So we have the offer of the crown to Cæsar in Act I.

From the inciting crisis the action rises to the *climax* by means of the development of the plot. From the climax or highest point of suspense, the action descends by means of the unraveling of the plot, which we call the *dénouement* (a French word which means literally the untying of the knot) to the *catastrophe*. Catastrophe means simply the ending of the play; it does not necessarily imply disaster.

Plots, then, are usually developed as follows: First, the introduction or exposition, which gives us the circumstances that happened before we met the characters, and something of the characters. The term introduction is better than that



of exposition, because exposition means explanation and occurs not only at the beginning of a play, but is often used more or less throughout. In *The Twilight Saint*, for example, Guido makes use of exposition in the last part of the play when he tells Lisetta how he met St. Francis. After the introduction, the rising action or development of the plot begins. The situation, pushed on by the inciting crisis, grows more and more involved and interesting until it reaches its highest point of suspense, which is the climax. On the way up, just as in real hill-climbing, the situation often meets smaller points or crises, which you sometimes mistake for the climax or summit, because you have gone through so much to arrive, and because from them you seem to look out over the plot. In *The Proposal* the exit of Lomov gives you a very strong crisis, but the climax does not occur until their second quarrel. Just as in real hill-climbing, when you have arrived at the real climax or summit of interest, you do not fail to recognize it. You see the action beginning to go down on the other side, through the dénouement, arriving finally at the end or catastrophe.

This does not mean that after the climax the play ceases to be interesting. You can have as much enjoyment in coming down hill as in going up — more, if you are short of breath. But you will not have the sensation of a steady upward climb. There will not be the *suspense* of wondering about the view from the top, though there may be many thrilling discoveries on the way down.

At the climax the opposing forces which form the element of *conflict* come to a death grapple, and the fate of the play is virtually decided, although the fate of many incidents is left in doubt. In *Romeo and Juliet* there can be no doubt



after the death of Mercutio and banishment of Romeo that the opposing force will overwhelm the lovers. Yet no scene of the play has greater interest than the final one.

Not every play may be said to have a climax. In George Kelly's play, *The Show-Off*, for example, there is no scene which carries in itself the *peak of the load of suspense*. There is no point at which *opposing forces meet in a death grapple*. No point at which the play is either doomed or saved. Yet every scene in that play has in it an intensifying of emotion, a *highest point of suspense* that may be said to be the climax of the scene.

This triangular structure plan is best seen in a play of three or more acts. In a one-act play the climax comes rapidly, and the catastrophe follows close, with little or no dénouement. The inciting crisis may have taken place before the curtain went up, and there is very little time for exposition.

Let us see how it works out in *Julius Cæsar*. In the introduction we learn of the growing tyranny of Cæsar, his tyrannical character, and the discontent of the republican faction. After the inciting crisis of offering the crown (which actually takes place off stage, its effect alone being visible to the audience) the plot develops through the crisis of Cæsar's murder to the climax, in the third act, of Marc Antony's funeral oration. Then there is the long dénouement of the counterplot of Antony and Octavius, the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, the appearance of the ghost of Cæsar (a crisis), and the battle of Philippi. The catastrophe is the death of Cassius and Brutus, and the triumph of Antony and Octavius. Both *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* show a better inciting crisis, more rapid development, shorter and more logical dénouement, and a more inevitable



catastrophe than *Julius Cæsar*. The last play, however, is likely to be more familiar to students.

This structure plan is by no means invariable. It is impossible to find it in a play like Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, or Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*, where the story is developed by means of a series of loosely connected scenes. It is, in fact, a tendency of modern playwrights to ignore the old principles of structure and to write their plays in episodes, rather than in acts.

It is true that a play lives in its characters. Its plot may be old, its theme outdated, its diction antequated; but if it has given to the world one character it can never quite die.

But when can we say that a character is well drawn? We say that Hamlet is a great character, so great that he stands at the summit of every actor's ambition. Even an essential comedian like Charles Chaplin wishes to act the melancholy Dane. Why? Remember that we are now reading a play and speaking of the characters as the author made them, not as the actor interprets them. It is true that a great actor has sometimes pumped life into a mediocre character, and saved it from an untimely death; but if that character is remembered it will be by virtue of the actor not the author.

The answer to the question "What makes a great character?" has already been suggested in the words *life* and *living*. A playwright has done well with his character if he has made it live. And this living means that he has given it a *truth to life*, and has made it stand out with *vividness*.

What's truth to life? Photography? A picture of someone you know? Have you ever known anyone exactly like Hamlet? Or have you rather known in yourself or in other people the emotions and the motives of Hamlet? Can you



translate Hamlet's situation into a modern one? Does it matter that doublets and bodkins and 'Sbloods and the medieval idea of vengeance are no more, as long as bitterness of spirit, the feeling of revenge, the thought of suicide, the conflict between thought and action still exist? This is truth in its deepest, most universal significance.

In contrast to such a character as Hamlet, who is unlike anyone you have ever known, but who embodies the profoundest emotions of the human race, are such characters as those Zona Gale shows in *Neighbors*, already mentioned as overdoing the naturalistic treatment. Mrs. Fisher in *The Show-Off* is admirably drawn; she is in fact, a photograph — a likeness which will make many of you grin as you read, because you know someone almost exactly like her; but is she the very spirit of broad comedy, like the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, or Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?

No discussion of characters is complete without a mention of the ubiquitous "stage type." The stage Irishman, the stage Jew, the stage Englishman, badly stuffed figures whose counterpart never existed on sea nor land, were once thought necessary to every truly funny farce. We still meet them in vaudeville, but even there they are mercifully dying off or becoming human. But the type character still struts about the stage. In as sparkling a farce as Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, we find a stage old maid, a stage clergyman, a stage match-making mamma, and even the glorification of the stage Englishman. It is true that *The Importance of Being Earnest* is by no means new; we mention it only to illustrate the fact that even the best plays are not free from the "stage type." Is not Romeo a stage type of lover, beautiful and poetic as the conception is? Does not the "Toff" in *A Night at an Inn*, though a fine



bit of character-drawing, suggest the typical "gentleman crook"?

Shakespeare is not often, however, caught hobnobbing with type characters. His minor characters, his confidential friends like Horatio, his servants, are in themselves real people. Notice how carefully and lovingly the picture of Lucius, the little page in *Julius Cæsar*, is drawn. This is what we mean by *vividness*. Compare Lucius with the "My lord, the carriage waits" type of servant.

It is time these characters spoke for themselves as characters do. In reading we find that the tests which we applied to character — *truth to life* (in a larger sense, not photographic naturalism), and *dramatic vividness* must apply also to dialog. The lines must be true to life and to the character who speaks them. What would be a very good speech for a newsboy would not (generally speaking) do for a college professor.

The following speeches are taken from Galsworthy's *Loyalties*. Two are spoken by women, one by a butler, one by an inspector of police, one by a guest in the house, one by an effeminate clubman. Can you guess which is which? Are they true? Are they vivid?

We have now the room as it was when the theft was committed. Reconstruct accordin' to 'uman nature, gentlemen — assumin' the thief to be in the room, what would he try first?

That ass! No! The man who put those there was clever enough and cool enough to wrench that creeper off the balcony, as a blind. Come, and look here, General.

It must be too frightfully thrilling.

Oh! Mr. Twisden, when will it be over? My head's getting awful sitting in that Court.



I say, is that the yarn that's going round, about his having a lot of m-money stolen in a country house? By Jove! He'll be pretty s-sick.

I should say about eleven-fifteen, sir. As soon as Major Colford and Captain Dancy had finished billiards. What was Mr. De Levis doing out of his room, if I may ask, sir?

Here are the first speeches of some of Shakespeare's characters. Note the swiftness and vividness of the characterization.

SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats, — well.

FALSTAFF. Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?

LADY MACBETH. Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
What thou art promis'd; yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way.

CELIA. I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.

GRUMIO. Knock, sir! whom should I knock? is there any man has rebused your worship?

CORDELIA. What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent.

BOTTOM. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

The following bit of dialog, from Granville Barker's *Madras House*, is absolutely naturalistic — a reproduction of the inane things people usually say. Taken in its setting it has point. Out of its setting it neither characterizes nor gets anywhere, though it does have the atmosphere of deadly boredom which the author wished it to convey.

JULIA. Oh, what a surprise!

PHILIP. Yes, we walked down. Ah, you don't know. Let me introduce Major Hippisly Thomas . . . my cousin, Miss Julia Huxtable . . . and Miss Huxtable.



JULIA. How do you do?

THOMAS. How do you do?

LAURA. How do you do?

JULIA. Have you come to see Aunt Amy?

PHILIP. No, your father.

JULIA. He's walking back with her. They'll be last I'm afraid.

LAURA. Will you stay to dinner?

PHILIP. No, I think not.

LAURA. I'd better tell them you won't. Perhaps they'll be laying for you.

(LAURA goes out . . . EMMA . . . comes in at the same moment.)

PHILIP. Hullo, Emma!

EMMA. Well, what a surprise!

PHILIP. You don't know . . . Major Hippisly Thomas . . . Miss Emma Huxtable.

THOMAS. How do you do?

EMMA. How do you do? Will you stay to dinner?

PHILIP. No, we can't.

In *Enter Madame* we have the situation of a mother returning to husband and son after some time spent in Europe where she has been a famous prima donna. In the mother's first speech we find her characteristic manner, contrasted with the characteristic manner of both father and son. Reconstruct these three characters from their speeches.

LISA. Johnnie! My little Johnnie has become a man! Ah, how the great earth must sigh as the generations rush by like a mighty wind drops, at sunset!

JOHN. Gee! it's great to have you come, mother. You always knock us off our feet. You look ripping! Ripping!

GERALD. Lisa, it's always The Great Day when you come.

When we say that dialog must seem *lifelike*, we do not mean that it is an exact reproduction of the way people talk, any more than we mean that a character must be like someone you know. A writer could not get his dramatic effect



by reproducing conversation that goes on around him. His audience would be bored to death. He must reproduce only what he needs for his effect. He must remain true to life; but he must also select what is interesting and what heightens his characterizations.

In other words dialog must be *lively*, and *it must tell a story*.

The following is a page from J. P. McEvoy's comedy, *The Potters*.

PA (*entering nervously with paper*). Stop that racket.

MA. Why, Pa! William's trying to fix the radio so we can hear the concert.

PA. I don't wanna hear any concert.

MAMIE. Why don't you and Ma go to a movie? You've got a good chance now with the baby at Grandma's.

BILL (*hurriedly*). Yes, why don't you? There's a swell movie at the corner.

MA. What's the name of it? (*Bill turns knob of radio so noise drowns answer.*)

PA (*making himself comfortable*). Where's the financial page of this paper anyway?

MA. What do you want with the financial page?

BILL. Look at the movie ads and see what's at the corner.

PA. I thought you knew.

MA (*looking at PA*). Your hair seems to be getting thinner on top. I think it needs some oil.

PA (*jumping up alarmed*). Oil!

MA (*amazed*). Why yes, didn't you ever hear tell of oil for the hair?

PA (*trying to cover up embarrassment*). Oh yes, yes.

RADIO. This is station M L O signing off for the night. It is now eight-fifteen.

MAMIE (*excitedly*). Then our clock's wrong. What's keeping Red anyway?

(*BILL rises and tries to sneak out.*)

PA. Oh, everything's always wrong in this house. Bill, where you goin'?



It seems at first as if anyone might have scrambled together a page of such very ordinary dialog. Yet we find that this apparently aimless conversation does three things. First, it gives the domestic atmosphere of an ordinary American family — a Potterish atmosphere. Second, it characterizes Pa as nervous and out-of-sorts. From the few lines he speaks here you somehow seem to see a small, ordinary, fussy man. Ma is the housewife, interested in small things, curious about details, accustomed to smoothing family quarrels. Bill and Mamie are the usual sort of thing in the way of brother and sister, both apparently with their interests outside the family. As to plot, we note from Pa's eagerness about the financial page, and his excitement when Ma mentions oil, that he has probably been investing. We know that Mamie is waiting for a caller, and that Bill has an interest in getting his family out of the way, an interest in which Mamie evidently sympathizes. Radio and the movies date the play in the present day; the time is eight-fifteen; and the mention of the corner movie, the baby at Grandma's, Pa's excitement over his oil venture, give us the setting and financial condition of the family as their diction gives their social background.

Dialog then should advance plot, develop character, give atmosphere. Sometimes a speech does all three, sometimes only one.

Which of these functions is performed by "Who's there?" the first line in *Hamlet*? Which by Bernardo's speech about the ghost in Scene i? Which by the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy?

Perhaps a word or two about atmosphere, that over-worked word, would not be amiss. Atmosphere means the feeling that surrounds a play as the actual atmosphere



envelops the earth. Off stage, as you know, a home, an office, a classroom may have an atmosphere of courtesy or severity; a landscape, of loneliness or domesticity; a personality, of stupidity or charm. So a play from the rise of the curtain may have the gloomy, fateful atmosphere of *Macbeth*, the homeliness of *The Little Minister*, the faery fancifulness of *The Bluebird*. *A Night at an Inn* is particularly atmospheric. From the first we are conscious that something mysterious, boding is afoot.

Setting has much to do with atmosphere: the rough, backwoods shack in *The Weather Breeder*, the Italian interior of *The Twilight Saint*, the dingy, lonely inn in *A Night at an Inn*, are all suggestive. We shall have a chapter on setting later. In the meanwhile, turn loose your imagination. "Let's pretend!" says Alice.

#### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Find newspaper situations that would make good plots, or that suggest plots.

2. Write a character sketch of the most dramatic character you know. Real person, please.

3. Develop the same character by means of two pages of dialog. Do both character and dialog seem to you true (without being actual reproductions) and vivid?

4. A girl has lost her pocketbook in the street car. Two days later the pocketbook is returned. Write two pages of dialog on this situation.

5. Bring in a list of themes you would like to see used in plays.

6. Write two pages of dialog around the theme: The younger generation is only repeating the mistakes of its parents. Try to give us as much information about situation, characters, and setting as we have in *The Potters*.

7. Discuss the themes of plays you have seen. Have all plays themes? Go as far as you can toward proving your statement.

8. Read *The Twilight Saint* on page 211. What is its theme?



9. Have an impromptu debate on the subject: Should the stage be used for propaganda?

10. In which of the three plays, *The Weather Breeder*, *A Night at an Inn*, *The Twilight Saint* does the introduction move most slowly? In *A Night at an Inn* find an example of exposition not in the introduction.

11. Write, in a page or two of dialog, the introduction of a play on the situation: Two brothers meet after an absence of twenty years. There is the development of a similar situation in O. Henry's story "After Twenty Years" in the collection *The Four Million*, which you might find interesting.

12. What is meant by the *motivation of a character*? Discuss Guido's motivation in the last part of *The Twilight Saint*. What motivates the exit of the four men at the end of *A Night at an Inn*?

13. Write a page of dialog which could be used to give a mysterious and "spooky" atmosphere.

14. Write stage directions for the setting of a mystery play.

15. Discuss the principles of plot division of the plays in this book that you have already read. What do you expect of climax, dénouement, and catastrophe in a one-act play? Do you find it true in these plays?

16. Is St. Francis in *The Twilight Saint* a naturalistic character? Is he realistic? Pia in the same play is a minor character. Is she well drawn? Compare her with Murl in *The Weather Breeder*. Which is more vivid?

17. In the four plays that we have read where do you find the most naturalistic dialog? Find speeches in each play that either characterize, advance the plot, or give atmosphere. Can you find any that accomplish all three purposes?

18. Why is the triangle on page 24 not drawn equilaterally?

19. Do you know the names of any actors that are always associated with certain characters?

20. Students who have read current plays, or who have access to a well-stocked library may be interested in the following: Bring to class any play of George Bernard Shaw's and read to the class the carefully detailed settings. Show how Barrie gives personality to his settings, making them almost like characters in the story: Take, if possible, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* in the collection *Echoes of the War*. Show how George Kelly in *The Show-Off* makes his settings tell his



story. What do you think of presenting Shakespeare in modern dress? What is proved by the experiment? Is it a new idea or has it been done before? An article in the *Theatre Arts Monthly* for July 1926 discusses this subject.

#### OUTLINE FOR READING *A Night at an Inn*

1. You have already read *A Night at an Inn* as a story. Read it now as a critical exercise, and write your discussion of the following points:

A. Kind of play:

Is this play easy to classify? Why or why not? Explain the melodramatic element. Is there also tragedy? Do you find any comedy? Is the play romantic? Naturalistic? Symbolistic? Which element predominates? Does it contain all three? Is it realistic?

B. Drama:

Is this play highly dramatic? Explain. In what does the conflict of the play consist?

C. Theme:

What is the theme of the play? Is it of major or minor importance? Is it made dramatic? Is it propaganda? Is it easy to find?

D. Structure:

What is the exposition of the play? How long does it take to give it? Is it cleverly managed? Follow the development of the plot to the climax. What is the dénouement? The catastrophe? How would the structure of a one-act play differ naturally from that of a longer play?

E. Characters:

Discuss the characters. Are they life-like? Vivid? Types or real persons? (Remember, real as characters, not reproductions of people you know.) Notice how carefully and swiftly the characters are differentiated. Discuss their differences. What have they in common? Are they equally well drawn? Are the priests successfully characterized without the aid of dialog by themselves? What about the idol? By what means has the author made him impressive? Are the motives of all the characters clear and do they consistently influence the characters?



## F. Dialog:

Is the dialog true to life? Is it an exact reproduction of the way people talk in real life? Is it interesting? Note the swiftness with which it works. Point out lines which characterize. Lines which give atmosphere. Lines which advance the plot. Is the author successful in blending all three?

## G. Atmosphere:

The atmosphere of this play deserves special study. Note how it is developed. What is the purpose of the lines about George and Jim? Note carefully the stage directions. Discuss the supernatural element in the play.

## H. Author:

Find out something about the author and his other plays. Is this play typical of his work?

If you should wish an outline for reading a longer play you may use this in reading *The Show-Off* by George Kelly.

OUTLINE FOR READING *The Show-Off*

1. Read *The Show-Off* first as a story, forgetting such irrelevancies as outlines, questions, textbooks.

2. Read *The Show-Off* as a critical exercise.

3. Write your discussion of the following points.

## A. Kind of play:

Why is this play a comedy? Explain the comedy elements. Do you find any farce, tragedy, or melodrama in it? If so where?

## B. Drama:

What scenes are most dramatic? Discuss their dramatic elements. Has the play conflict? If so in what does it consist? Is the play ever lacking in drama?

## C. Method:

Is the naturalism of this play also realism? That is, does the author seek merely to photograph life, or is he trying by means of a photograph to show the truth that lies underneath? Do you find this use of the naturalistic method sordid or unpleasant?



D. Theme:

What is the theme of the play? Is it of major or minor importance? Is it made dramatic? Has the author any special propaganda to get across? Is his view of life pleasant or unpleasant?

E. Structure:

Show how much exposition of the play is given in the stage directions. Follow the development of plot to the climax. What is the dénouement of the story? The catastrophe?

F. Characters:

Does the author seem to you to understand human nature? Discuss the characters. Are they lifelike? Vivid? Types or real persons or both? (Remember, real as characters, not reproductions of people you know.) Did you ever know anyone like Aubrey? Has he a universal character? Do you know other plays with similar characters? What about Bottom? What about Peer Gynt? Do you sympathize with Aubrey or detest him? Does he deceive himself as to his real character and attainments? Does he deceive Amy? If not, why does she marry him? Discuss Ma Fisher. Is she a photograph, or has she a universal quality? Is Kelly successful with his minor characters? Which one is best? What dramatic purpose does Joe serve in the play?

G. Dialog:

Is the dialog true to life? Is it an exact reproduction of the way people talk in real life? Is it interesting? Is it characteristic of the people who speak it? Illustrate your points by speeches from the play.

H. Author:

Find out something about the author and his other plays.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### ACTING A PLAY: PANTOMIME

QUINCE. We will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

And now to be players.

Of course the only way to learn to act is to act, just as the only way to swim is to swim, or to cook is to cook. But in swimming there are different strokes, and you can never swim the Channel unless you have a goal. So in acting there are aims and methods. Let no one persuade you that there is not technique of acting and that anyone who has taken part in a class play is ready to go on the stage! There is very difficult technique, and to acquire it is a life work: to write about it is another. So let us merely snatch a few fundamentals, as the small boy snatches cookies from the cooky jar, and rush to our play.

In the first place, you must understand that the actor's art is not imitative, it is *creative*. An actor does not imitate character, he *creates* character. You may wish to present here in the classroom the characterization of a person whom you know. You know this person intimately, you have observed him carefully. But if you present to us only an imitation of what you have observed in him, you are not acting. It is not enough, even, that you are able to think his thoughts, feel his emotions, act from his motives. You must, when you can do all this, breathe the breath of life into your conception of him. You must make him live for



us as you see him. Then he becomes not only himself, but yours. You are his creator.

If you are to present a character in a play, the process is the same. You must make every endeavor to get on the inside of that character, to see him as the author meant you to see him. You may take him to pieces — the very smallest pieces. But you must be able to do more than all the king's horses and all the king's men; you must put him together again, make him live and show him to us as *your* character as well as the author's character.

That is why we speak of Edwin Booth's Hamlet, Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet, John Barrymore's Hamlet, as well as Shakespeare's Hamlet. It matters not that your mental picture of Hamlet be fat, blond and jolly; if John Barrymore makes you see him slender, dark and thoughtful, and makes you believe at the same time that Shakespeare saw him so, then he becomes John Barrymore's Hamlet.

This is one reason why Hamlet is a challenge to the actor. It is because of the difficulty of taking to pieces and putting together so complex a personality.

The foundation of acting is pantomime, and pantomime, as you know from the films, is conveying an idea, feeling, or character without the aid of words. Pantomime is the oldest and simplest method of expression. Don't think it is confined to the stage. You remember the man who was surprised to find he had spoken prose all his life. All your life you have been acting in pantomime. And you were probably better at pantomime in your earliest youth than you are to-day. In those days, you did not rise and address your mother, saying, "Madam, I am indignant that this porridge that has been brought me is not what I ordered. I want the cake that my brother is eating, and I insist on



having what I want!" No, you pouted and threw your spoon on the floor (not you, but badly brought-up babies did) and pushed away your porringer and pointed to the cake your brother had, and perhaps pounded with your fists upon the table. If you did that in a restaurant to-day, they would call the police. But when you were good at pantomime you "got across" your idea perfectly.

Now, also, you are employing pantomime constantly. You know of course that when you wish to borrow an eraser during a quiz, you employ pantomime, but perhaps you do not realize the unconscious pantomime that goes on constantly in a classroom. Without words, you are conveying to your instructor all sorts of character ideas and impressions — laziness, efficiency, stealth, nervousness, weariness, boredom, dreaminess, courtesy, vanity, energy, interest.

Your first exercise will be to pantomime two or three actions, such as borrowing a pencil or inquiring the page of a lesson, actions that you ordinarily use in the classroom or outside.

The second exercise is to convey by pantomime the character impressions which I mentioned above. Some of them require close thinking and observation. Can you distinguish between weariness, boredom, dreaminess and laziness? Between nervousness and stealth? How would you show vanity by means of pantomime? Would the ordinary vanity-box pantomime necessarily show vanity? Perform it to indicate boredom or nervousness. Do it stealthily. Borrow a book courteously, discourteously, lazily, stealthily. Add many other suggestions of your own.

In the first exercise we are interested in your *action*, in the second, in the way you *perform* the action.



These pantomimes should consist of a single action and should be very brief. Do not tell the class what you are going to do, but prepare your pantomime so carefully that the purpose of your action is perfectly clear.

For the following day, prepare a more elaborate pantomime in which you present, for instance, driving a car, getting ready for a party, listening at the radio, washing dishes, making a cake, going swimming, trying on a new pair of shoes, studying a lesson. These are merely suggestions, and no doubt your instructor will prefer that you present your own ideas. Any one of these pantomimes, of course, consists of several actions, of a whole process of actions necessary to bring out your idea; and will occupy about five minutes in the giving.

Observe the following directions carefully: (1) Your pantomime should be the result of careful observation. (2) It should be carefully rehearsed. (3) It should have a beginning, middle, and end. (4) Every movement should be very clear to the audience, and the idea of the whole action should be clear to them by about the third movement. That is, the audience should not be wondering whether you are shaving or committing suicide — their suspense should be over at about the third movement. (5) It should contain only the significant movements of the action. That is, to put in every detail of cake-making would be wearisome. Such significant actions as assembling some of the material, sifting flour, beating eggs, stirring, tasting mixture, pouring it into pan, putting pan in the oven would be sufficient. (6) It should be creative, not merely imitative. Although you are not yet attempting characterization, your audience should feel that this is a real episode in which you are living, made interesting by occasional characteristic,



often funny, actions in which a person performing that act usually indulges. For instance, the cake-maker might burn her fingers in putting the pan into the oven; or she might conclude the process by that attractive ending known as "licking the spoon."

Test your pantomime and criticize those of others by the above six points.

#### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. What is the difference between mimicry and acting? Show the class an example of mimicry.

2. Discuss the word creative as applied to acting. Apply also to music, painting, architecture by illustrations.

3. Shakespeare says that the actor should "hold the mirror up to nature." What do you think is meant by this?

4. Write a theme on actor-characterizations you have seen at the movies or elsewhere. For instance, Lon Chaney in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; Margaret Mann in *Four Sons*; Emil Jannings in *The Last Command*; Douglas Fairbanks in *The Man in the Iron Mask*; George Arliss in *Disraeli*; Maurice Chevalier in *Innocents of Paris*.

5. Give a reason for the popularity of the movies. Have a debate on talking pictures. Does voice add or detract?

6. Why is pantomime fundamental in acting?



## CHAPTER SIX

### ACTING A PLAY: PANTOMIME AND CHARACTER

LADY. It's uncanny to have so much said to one in silence.

— *Deburau.*

An interesting little book on Amateur and Educational Dramatics<sup>1</sup> has some experimental exercises which illustrate the importance of pantomime in acting and its significance as an index of emotion.

They are somewhat like these. Try them either individually or as a class.

(1) Pull down the corners of your mouth. Draw down the corners of your eyes. Frown. Drop your shoulders. Say, "I am so happy!"

(2) Clench your fists. Square your shoulders. Set your jaw. Take a firm step forward. Say, "You're a darling!"

(3) Slip down in your chair. Drop your shoulders. Let your arms fall limply at your sides. Drop your jaw. Roll your eyes upward. Say, "I swear to do it!"

These humorous little experiments prove the truth for the actor in the old proverb, "Actions speak louder than words." When words mean one thing and the body another, one believes the body. Anyone can lie in words, but only the most practised liar can make the body speak falsely; and even then there are tell-tale signs that the experienced can read.

Try the reverse of the above experiment. Stand relaxed.

<sup>1</sup>*Amateur and Educational Dramatics* by Evelyn Hilliard, Theodora McCormick, and Kate Oglebay.



Experience in your imagination a feeling of intense pride. Proud of yourself, of your ancestry, of your achievements, of your future. Feel capable of all great and daring deeds. Say slowly and emphatically to yourself the line of Peer Gynt's, "I will be a king, an emperor!" Forget your surroundings, and take whatever position, make whatever gesture, your imagination dictates. It is for your instructor to decide whether you have succeeded in looking like a floor-man in a department store, or every inch a king. The point is, don't *try* to look like anybody. Just feel. You will find your pantomime will correspond with your feeling. If it does not, your self-consciousness is too great, or your imagination too small. A course in dramatics should remedy both these defects.

Assume a position indicating determination — back straight, head up, chin lifted, muscles tense, mouth firm, eyes narrowed. Do you feel weak or strong? Drop your shoulders, relax muscles and yawn. Do you feel lively or weary? Take the attitude of listening intently. Do you feel relaxed or strained?

All this shows the interdependence of the physical and emotional, and the importance of pantomime.

Now, present a pantomime in which you perform an action as you did yesterday, but in which the action is subordinate to the feeling with which it is performed. For instance: yesterday you studied a lesson. To-day you are angry at having to prepare a lesson and you show it in your body and in the way you turn the pages. Yesterday you drove the car. To-day you are a new driver and are frightened — you show fear in every movement.

Your next exercise will be an entrance or an exit, showing emotion. You will come into a room, or leave it, joyfully,



angrily, fearfully, stealthily, or with any other emotion. This pantomime should be presented in a doorway using what is known on the stage as a "practical" door. In this pantomime remember that an important point of your entrance or exit is just at the door. It is as bad to drop your feeling or assume it in view of the audience, as it would be to start taking off or putting on your costume in sight of the audience. Feeling and character must be sensed at the beginning and sustained at the end, before the door opens or after it closes.

It is possible that in some of your pantomimes you have already employed, perhaps not very skilfully, what is known as "transition." Your next exercise after your study of entrances and exits will be a transition pantomime. By transition is meant, as you have doubtless concluded, the passing from one feeling to another. Indifference changes to surprise, anger to apology, sorrow to joy. You are, we might say, waiting for a street-car, bored and restless. You see on the other side of the street a vaguely familiar figure. Is it? No, it cannot be! Yes, it is! It is Bill! Hello, Bill! Again, you come home from school tired, and cross; on the table lies a letter in a familiar handwriting.

In preparing these transitions the important thing is that the transition shall take place in your own mind, in your own emotion, first. Pantomime is the natural response or *reaction* to certain outside *stimuli*. It is the glimpse of Bill that brings from you a response of surprise and pleasure and causes the transition from boredom to liveliness. It is the sight of the letter on the table that brings about in you a reaction of pleasure or excitement or disappointment, and causes a transition from your first mood of weariness. This letter is a *stimulus* to your change of feeling, or transition.



If, then, you were to try to put yourself out of your mood of weariness without first seeing Bill or the letter in your *mind*, then there is no reaction, no reason for your transition from weariness to excitement, and your pantomime is mechanical and without meaning.

Suppose you try an exercise in which your instructor or some member of the class holds up before you a number of objects to which you would naturally react, and let the class watch your pantomime of reaction to these stimuli. I might suggest a letter, a snake (artificial, please!), a collection of snap-shots, etc. Let the sight of these objects produce in you their natural reaction. This will be, of course, very different in different persons. If you are afraid of snakes, your reaction to a toy snake would not be at all like that of a person who found them interesting and curious.

Handle a rose as if it reminded you of a dead friend. Handle a rose as if you were subject to rose fever. Handle a dagger as a child might, or a pirate, or an assassin!

Try the same exercise with imaginary objects as stimuli, handling the imaginary objects to make them seem real, to give them the right dimensions, and to give yourself concentration.

Try the same exercise with sounds. First real ones, then imaginary ones: the ringing of a bell, a crash, a shout.

And this brings us to a remark on *sincerity* in acting. There are tricks in every trade, there are many in acting; but they are the mark of the fakir. There is no substitute for thought and feeling. Only the stupid in an audience are deceived by tricks, and even they may feel vaguely that something is wrong, without knowing what it is. Put the sincere actor beside the trickster, and if the two are equal in ability, the stupidest audience knows the difference.



Every thought, every feeling which you wish to convey to your audience you must experience first. Your movements must be the result of the reaction to that thought or feeling. The putting out of your hand, the raising of your eyebrow, must be prompted by an idea or an emotion which is strong enough to put out your hand or raise your eyebrow. If you perform the action without the feeling you are mechanical and "stagey."

Criticize every act in your classroom by the touchstone of sincerity.

At this point someone usually says, "You surely do not mean that an actor must live an emotion each time he portrays it." We have already touched on that question, and we shall have more to say about it in Chapter Twelve. For the present, "to *you*" the answer is: Yes, *you* must while you are preparing these pantomimes think each thought, and feel through your imagination each emotion. When you were learning to walk, to swim,



STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION  
A Chinese



to dance, to play the piano, to drive a car, you had to think of every movement. Later the processes of these things became unconscious. But that is another story. You



STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION  
A Cossack

cannot now hope for sincerity unless you are in very truth reacting by means of your imagination to the stimuli presented to you.

And now for character.

We have been interested in action and emotion; but our business with them is for the sake of character. For you cannot present pure action or feeling on the stage. They must belong to someone. They must be the action and emotion of someone. Like light passing through a

prism, they become refracted into the color of a soul.

Suppose you take an action pantomime like the one you have just given: telephoning, driving, or something of the sort. Get a different one, not the one you gave the other day. And do it differently with a view to presenting a



*character* by that action. You are entering a street-car, but it is not *you* who are entering. It is a nervous, fussy old lady who has escaped from her granddaughter, and is going on a street-car adventure alone. Or it is a "flapper" conscious of her clothes, and of the admiring glances of the young man across the aisle. Or it is a "hard-boiled" character, who is trying to slip past the conductor without paying the fare. Or it is a tired woman with bundles and two children. Or it is a haughty lady whose limousine has broken down, and whose pride is suffering at being obliged to ride in a street-car.

Always in a pantomime that includes others, give a sense of those others. These invisible characters to whom you are speaking should be visible to the eyes of our imagination. If you are pantomiming a scene at a restaurant table, we must know what the waiter is like. If there is anyone at the table with you, we must get a picture of him.

Let all work be original, suggestions coming from real life. Do not serve warmed-over pictures, or warmed-over stage.



STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION  
An Arab



You will become mechanically imitative rather than sincerely creative.

Now you may make a life-study of a character — *not* a character in a play or a story, please. Choose one whose characteristics are well marked, one who naturally stands out from other people. Observe that character closely until you feel you know him. Then cast off all thought of imitation and become in your imagination that character. Imagine him in a situation that can be easily acted and which lends itself readily to the character. For example an Italian hurdy-gurdy man is naturally picturesque, and would better be shown going about with his organ and his monkey than eating his dinner or going to church.

If your character is old, remember age is not so much a matter of form as of spirit. You may bend your back and shake your hands; but unless you can in imagination have the point of view of an old man, you can never characterize age. Not only must back and legs be old, eyes, nose, mouth must also be old, informed by the mental viewpoint you have been able imaginatively to acquire. Difficult? Well, rather!

In the same way an emotion sincerely felt will manifest itself throughout the body. Anger shows not only in flashing eyes, set jaw, clenched fists; but in the back of the neck, the ankles and feet, all the tension of the muscles. A famous director once said to an actress, "Great Heavens, woman, can't you register with anything except your face!"

Plan your pantomime carefully. Be sure that it has a beginning, middle, and end.

Be sure that its action is subordinate to its character; that is, we must be more interested in the Italian hurdy-gurdy man than in the action of playing the hurdy-gurdy.



See that your pantomime does not lack what story-tellers call "human interest"; for you are a story-teller, telling a story by the oldest of all human methods.

If there are other people (imagined not seen) in your pantomime, be sure that you give your audience an idea of their presence.

Be sure, also, that your transitions really take place in your own mind before you perform any action intended to indicate them to the audience.

Make your character lifelike and vivid.

Be sincere in your work.

After you have studied individual pantomimes for a time, your class should break up into groups, and give pantomime scenes from real life, or dramatizations of familiar stories.

As you form groups, technical difficulties will arise which your instructor will take care of. The old rule of never turning one's back to the audience has been broken in favor of greater naturalism. But one cannot haphazardly turn one's back; one can only do so deliberately and for an effect. Every movement must have a meaning. Move definitely, with a purpose. If you have no purpose in moving, keep still. Do not shift on your feet. Do not cross the stage simply for the sake of crossing. If you must cross, do so with a motive, and at a time when you will neither break your own action nor that of anyone else. If you must cross in front of someone (and it is the centering of attention that determines who takes the front of the stage) the person crossed will naturally countercross a step or two in order to balance the stage. But this is not invariable, nor should it be done mechanically. Do not bunch on one side of the stage, nor huddle against the back-drop, nor form a straight line. And do not deaden your act by continually looking



down. Looking down, like every other movement on the stage, must mean something. Habitually to look down is to look dead.

*Learn to walk on the stage, without slouching, to stand without wiggling, to sit without sprawling, to use your hands without fumbling.*

Practice moving about the stage, walking, standing, sitting, shaking hands, picking up a book from the table, a handkerchief from the floor. But motivate it all. Think as you cross the stage: "I am in a ball room." Visualize yourself in beautiful clothes. Think as you sit, "I am a king" or, "I am a queen." There is no better exercise for all this than learning to dance a minuet.

*After all, the stage is not actuality; it is only an illusion or appearance of actuality.*

As a bridge between pantomime and reading lines prepare an original character monolog. Make your character talk while he acts. You will have to imagine other people present; for soliloquies are usually stiff and unnatural. Avoid all unnaturalness. Do not always repeat what the other person is supposed to have said. We can imagine what he has said by your replies. A student has been able to give delightfully a whole tea-party of old ladies, with a very good illusion not only of the hostess, who is speaking, but of all the old ladies who are guests. Another student has given father coming home from his work at night, all of the rest of the family in their various rôles. Another has shown us a group of small boys playing marbles; another, a guide with a party of fishermen.

Those of you who have been fortunate enough to hear some of Miss Ruth Draper's character monologs will remember the perfect picture she gave you of a woman, with



her baby and little boy, waiting in the corridor of a hospital for news of her injured husband. Or of a telephone girl at a hotel switchboard, talking now into the receiver, now to the other operators, now to people who stopped at the desk. Or of a girl at a dance, keeping her various partners interested.

Do not rely too much on your medium of words, and forget the action. Let the action as well as the words tell the story. *And have plenty of action.*

#### OUTLINE FOR THE STUDY OF PANTOMIME

##### 1. Feeling:

- A. Is the imagination aroused?
- B. Is the feeling a natural response to a stimulus?
- C. Is the action a natural consequence of the feeling? Note that first there must be a stimulus to the imagination. Second, a feeling which is a response to the stimulus. Third, action — a consequence of the feeling.
- D. Is the feeling sincere?

##### 2. Action:

- A. Is it clear?
- B. Is it too detailed?
- C. Is it correctly observed?
- D. Is the handling of imaginary objects, spacing, etc. well done?

##### 3. Character:

- A. Is the character vivid?
- B. Is the character true?
- C. Is the work creative or imitative?
- D. Are the characteristics shown mechanical and accidental, or do they spring from the feelings, motives, or point of view?

##### 4. The pantomime as a whole:

- A. Is it well planned? (Beginning, middle, end.)
- B. Is it interesting?
- C. Is it clear?
- D. Does it show preparation and sincerity?



## QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Present a pantomime in which you depict an emotion with face alone. No action, like a "close-up" in the films. (1) Without transition. (2) With transition. Notice that not only eyes and mouth are capable of expression, but the forehead, and the so-called "mask" of the face — nose and cheeks — as well. Stand behind a screen with the hand alone visible. With the hand alone, say, "I am hungry." "I am tired." "I love you." With the feet alone, express shyness, happiness, anger.

2. Study reproductions of pictures that show character, like Franz Hals' Laughing Cavalier, and present in pantomime an imaginary situation — a duel or a flirtation, for example, in which that character might appear. The studies in character make-up (pages 49-51), by Mr. Anthony Karnagel of Hollywood, may be used for characterization.

3. In groups, act impromptu pantomimes of Mother Goose rimes.

4. Arrange "Cinderella" or "Bluebeard" or "Rip Van Winkle" as a pantomime and act it.

5. Let the instructor assign characters chosen either from life, or from novels or plays in this book that you have read.

6. Have a class discussion of the statement on page 54 — "the stage is not actuality."



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ACTING A PLAY: THE VOICE—PHYSICAL ASPECTS

“For some of us are out of breath,  
And all of us are fat.”

—*Through the Looking-Glass.*

There may be two sides to every question; there are certainly two sides to development of the voice. And as Sir Roger De Coverley said, “Much may be said on both sides.” The size of this book does not permit much to be said on either side.

The sides of voice development are physical and mental.

On the physical side, voice is largely a matter of proper breathing. Physically speaking, proper breathing requires an understanding of the mechanism of breathing and its correct use. It has been said many times that every art has its tools and its technique. These cannot be neglected. Even Paderewski would be baffled by a sprained finger, or by meagre knowledge of fingering. Galli Curci's voice would have no chance against a reluctant diaphragm.

Perhaps some of you with very good voices, too, are unaware of the existence of the diaphragm. Let me introduce you. The diaphragm (please note the *g* in the spelling) is a thin sheet of muscle which separates the thoracic cavity, containing heart and lungs, from the abdominal cavity, containing the digestive organs.

The breathing apparatus is something like this:

Lungs, like elastic sponges which tend to contract and



squeeze out all the air contained in them; an air-tight cavity into which the lungs very exactly fit; twelve pairs of ribs supporting the walls of this cavity, attached to the breast-bone or sternum in front and the spine behind; muscles between these ribs known as the intercostal muscles, capable of moving the ribs upward and outward; the diaphragm, that thin sheet of muscle, shaped like a dome, which closes the cavity at the bottom.

The breathing process is something like this:

When the intercostal muscles cause the ribs to move upward and outward, and the diaphragm flattens out downward, the lung cavity is enlarged. Hence the lungs must expand to keep the cavity filled, otherwise there would be a vacuum, and air must be *inhaled*. Now when these muscles relax, the ribs are let down, and the diaphragm rises, becoming more dome-shaped. Thus the thoracic cavity becomes smaller, the lungs contract, and air must be *exhaled*.

The rising of the diaphragm in exhalation is caused both by the relaxation of the diaphragm and by the simultaneous pressure of the abdominal muscles below the diaphragm which are always working in opposition to it.

So you see that in breathing the diaphragm presses down during inhalation and the thoracic cavity is enlarged. And you see that in exhalation the thoracic cavity becomes smaller and the diaphragm rises. Inhale and exhale, with your hands pressed lightly just below the ribs in front (do not put your hands on your hips) and see if this is not so.

So far we have only breath, we have no tone.

Now, in the lower part of the throat, is situated a bony box called the larynx. Across the top of this box are the vocal cords, not really cords at all, but two flat membranes.



When air passes between these cords, they vibrate like the strings of a harp, and produce tone.

Tone is shaped into words by the tongue, roof of the mouth or hard palate, teeth, and lips. A defect in any of these, as you know, causes a voice defect, such as a lisp, or inability to form words properly.

Air entering through the nose reinforces the tone. If this supply of air is cut off, we have the effect known as "talking through the nose," which really doesn't mean talking through the nose, but only not breathing through it.

Now the agency of the diaphragm in the business of breathing is of the utmost importance. It gives support to the voice, and control to the breath. Here are a few exercises for gaining that support and control.

In the first place, posture is of great importance in breathing. The body should be straight, head up, shoulders straight, weight on the balls of the feet, knees relaxed, back of neck arched, — poise without a sense of strain. Business of "throwing out the chest" like a pouter pigeon should be avoided; because it strains muscles that should be relaxed. A good exercise for obtaining perfect posture is to stand against a wall, with the back of the head and the spine for its entire length touching the wall, with the feet away from the wall as far as you can get them without losing balance. Then, without losing position, push the wall with both hands and bring yourself forward to erect standing position.

Of course, no mechanical exercise will take the place of attitude of mind. If, after you have taken the above exercise, or without taking it at all, you will imagine yourself with wings standing on the prow of a great ship, like the Winged Victory, the great winds blowing about you, then you will stand as if you had wings.



Still standing as if you had wings, place your hands just below the ribs in front, as I suggested a moment ago, and laugh silently but heartily. Laugh as the villain might who doesn't want to be heard by his intended victim across the room. Laugh lightly, making no sound, as you might if a dog came strolling down the aisle in church. Then sob, violently and soundlessly, like a small child who is sobbing itself to sleep. Then sniff inquiringly: Is the house on fire? Is the toast burning? Is that delicious odor roses or lilacs? Then pant like a dog, a large dog, Towser not Toto, who has been chasing a rabbit up a hill.

Do these exercises serve to introduce you to your diaphragm; or are you still in doubt as to where it is, and how it works? Do not the exercises show you the action that automatically takes place in such natural actions as laughing, crying, sighing, or sneezing?

Now, maintaining your erect position, and with your hands still feeling the movement around the diaphragm, inhale and exhale slowly. Not forcibly, but easily, waiting till you are ready to drink deep draughts of air. Do you feel the diaphragm pressing down when you inhale, and the circumference of the body just under the ribs enlarging? It is important that the shoulders and the upper chest be kept still. Practise at home where you can lie flat on your back. Then other muscles are relaxed, activity centered in the diaphragm, and there is no danger of moving the shoulders up and down. Some people say, "But my diaphragm moves up when I inhale." Of course it doesn't, it only seems to do so because they are moving their shoulders up. If you have difficulty about moving the shoulders, strap a leather belt around you tightly just under the arms.

Another way in which to secure good diaphragm support



is to take breathing exercises while resting both hands flat on a table. Throw almost the entire weight of the body on the palms of the hands, and lean forward over the hands, with the feet dragging away from the table as far as possible, just the toes touching the floor. This puts the diaphragm into a position of splendid responsibility!

Now, in a standing position, try sniffing again, emphatically, inquiringly. Think that it is a tingling morning in camp in the woods, and someone is making the coffee. Then, without pause, begin panting heavily, as if you were running hard uphill. Then, without pause, say the syllable *ha*: *ha-ha-ha* one syllable for each inhalation. Keep the breath out of your voice. No breathy tone is a good tone.

Note the conditions of the exercise: erect posture, quiet shoulders and upper chest, movement of diaphragm — down on the intake, up on the exhalation.

Note the aim of the exercises: active diaphragm, passive upper chest.

Note the result later: support and breath control.

Try all this again, from sniffing through the use of the syllable *ha*.

Then think of this stanza of poetry.

“When all the world is young, lad,  
And all the trees are green;  
And every goose a swan, lad,  
And every lass a queen;  
Then, hey! for boots and saddles,  
And to the fields away!  
Young blood must have its course, lad,  
And every dog his day!”

Think of this stanza with all its youthful spirit, and see what it does to your posture! Then say the stanza, using



the syllable *ha* instead of the words of the stanza, in the rhythm of the lines.

Then say it with the words, keeping them staccato, one word for each breath. Get the gay spirit and swing of the lines.

Notice that after each syllable the diaphragm comes back into position for the next syllable. So that when you are saying the lines in staccato, you are continually feeling a recoil or "kick back" of the diaphragm, as thus: First, inhale, then say the syllable *ha*. Then exhale. Then feel the recoil or come-back to original position of the diaphragm, ready for the next syllable. Practise this with counting; taking the exercise the same way as with the syllable *ha*, only counting from one to ten or from one to twenty instead of saying *ha*. Feel the recoil of the diaphragm after each count, and pack in more air after each syllable.

Practise these exercises. Use different stanzas of poetry, and always, whether you are using the words or the syllable *ha* in tune to the lines, keep the spirit and swing of the lines.

Get relaxation and freedom of the entire body before beginning these exercises by stretching and yawning. Standing on your tiptoes, make a gesture of pushing a hole in the sky and letting all the stars fall about your head, and as they fall suddenly relax. Push out the walls of the room with the palms of your hands; and as they fall, relax. Push down the floor with the palms of your hands, and relax. Imagine yourself a stiffly starched collar hanging stiffly on a line. Along comes a shower and takes the starch out of you: out of your fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, back of your neck, spine, till you are the limpest collar that ever annoyed a washerwoman.



Do these relaxation exercises in rhythm, to music if possible.

While we want activity at the diaphragm, we want something different at the throat; namely, relaxation and openness. This relaxation is often due to mental conditions, but can be obtained physically. For instance, let your jaw fall, don't *open* your mouth, let it *fall* open. It will make you look feeble-minded, but in the cause of art! Make the sound you would make in blowing out a candle, *wh-wh-wh-* still with the dropped jaw of course. Do not pucker the lips for the *wh-wh-*.

Again, let your jaw drop, keeping it relaxed, and say *ah*. Then without closing your mouth, let your jaw drop a little farther from its first drop and say *ah* again. Let it drop again from its second position (*drop*, not open forcibly) and repeat *ah*. Repeat as long as you can without closing the mouth. Do it each time as if you were swallowing a larger and larger section of air in a triangle, as if all the air in the room were a ghostly pie. Practise the syllables *O* and *I* in the same way.

Say sonorous lines, like

“Roll on, thou deep, and dark blue ocean, roll!”

And,

“O thou that rollest above,  
Round as the shield of my fathers!”

Say them with wide open mouth and relaxed jaw, and active diaphragm.

Lips, of course, should be *flexible*. For this there is no better exercise than the time-honored one of *me-mo-me-mo-me-mo-mi-mo-me-mo*, said as rapidly as possible, with flexible movement of the lips. It gives distinctness and ease of enunciation.



The nose aids in resonance of tone. *Resonance* is a quality given largely by proper breathing and open throat. But a voice without nasal resonance is dry and brittle, a nasal tone. Hold your nose and hum a tune! It can't be done! Practise humming. Hum the scale up and down. Hum four times on each note. Then take the syllables *ah* and *oh* in the same way. Then try *ä*, *ā*, *ē*, *ō*, *oo* on each note. Make your tone as bell-like as possible. Let it *float* without effort.

These exercises, while fundamental, are the merest suggestions of voice development. Even these, practised accurately and faithfully, for an hour a day, will accomplish extraordinary results in obtaining control, freedom, and resonance.

The outline may be filled in as heavily as your instructor likes. But you are asked to remember that no mechanical exercise can take the place of the mental side of voice development, which this book wishes to emphasize, and which is the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ACTING A PLAY: THE VOICE—MENTAL ASPECTS

CITIZEN. I thank you for your voices; thank you;  
Your most sweet voices.

—*Coriolanus*.

We saw in pantomime and in our own experiments with pantomime how decidedly the physical is influenced by the mental and emotional. We found that a feeling of pride could lift the chin, reverence bend the knee, or indifference shrug the shoulders. And that although merely assuming these attitudes might assist the imagination, we saw that if there was no accompaniment of feeling, there was no real effect.

It is so with the voice. An active diaphragm, relaxed throat, flexible lips, free head passages and all the rest, do not mean a beautiful or expressive voice. Not every actor with a perfect mechanism and technique can thrill an audience, any more than every unrheumatic biped can give pleasure as an aesthetic dancer. Miss Julia Marlowe has one of the most perfect speaking voices in the world, and knows most perfectly how to use it; but it is Miss Marlowe's exquisite understanding of the lines and richness of imagination that made listening to her balcony scene an unforgettable delight.

Voice is but a medium for mental and emotional states; voice is the most sensitive medium of the entire body. It is like a pool into which no pebble of feeling can be cast without producing a ripple of response. A hard, inflexible,



monotonous voice, whose surface is unstirred, generally means either that there is no emotional power behind it, or that the emotions are rock-bound by indifference, preoccupation, self-consciousness. I say generally, because no emotion is proof against the devastating effect of a cold in the head.

But what seems to be the result of rigid muscles or improper breathing, is often the result of mental condition. You have all felt the dry mouth and choking sensation in the throat caused by nervousness or fear — that same fear that makes your knees shake so conspicuously. That is a symptom you know perfectly as the physical result of a mental condition.

But there are other signs not so easily recognized. Any lack of ease, sense of unfamiliarity, or constraint in the part which you are studying, will produce a constricted throat and flaws in breathing. Any straining for effect and conscious manipulation of attitude or voice will set the jaw and close the throat.

More than that, indifference and preoccupation of mind will counteract the results of careful voice training.

A clergyman once consulted a teacher of voice about his Sunday hoarseness. No defect in throat, voice placement, or breathing being discovered, the teacher asked the clergyman to preach to him, as to a congregation, a few paragraphs of his last Sunday's sermon. The minister complied, and while at first he spoke with fervor, it was evident as he went on, that his familiarity with his subject, the customariness of the whole proceeding was causing him to become mechanical. He had ceased speaking and begun to "orate." Whatever of feeling he had when the ideas had first come to him; whatever he might have had, if he had allowed his



attention to concentrate with new power on what he was saying at the moment, instead of slipping ahead to gather up what he was going to say next, was gone. The meaning of his words was no longer fresh and vivid. His breath control was lost, his voice rasped, his throat constricted, and hoarseness was the result of a condition purely mental.

It is thinking and feeling, thinking and feeling in concrete pictures as you say each word, which gives to a voice light and shadows, inflections, melody, and color.

Say the word *love* and think, "I wonder what we're going to have for dinner," or say the word *love* and get a concrete picture of what love means to you at the moment: Juliet on her balcony, St. Joan fighting for France, or the aged Lear bending despairingly over the dead body of his daughter.

Whatever may be the picture, its vividness, depth, and significance to you will color your tone. Whatever your reaction to your mental image is, will be made apparent in this tone-color of the word. If the word *love* calls up no more to you than the vision of a plate of ice-cream, we shall know that too.

Say the word *fire* and see a conflagration, a hearth-fire, a sunset, a "thin red line of 'eroes."

Say Carl Sandburg's poem, "Fog," and get a definite picture of every word:

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.  
It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

Say the alphabet, and associate what pictures you will with *A B C D*. Say it defiantly. Say it tenderly. Say it



laughingly. Say it excitedly. Say it furiously. Say it triumphantly. You'd be surprised at the picturesqueness of an alphabet!

The story is told of a Spaniard who replied to the remark that Spanish is a beautiful language with an enthusiastic, "Ah, yes. But we have no word so beautiful as your wonderful word 'cellar-door'!" Heaven knows what picture the sound of that word called to his mind; but it is certain that it could not have been the one it brings to our minds. But if you can get rid of the ordinary association of "cellar-door," and associate it with something beautiful, your own voice will show you that the Spaniard was right in thinking it a beautiful word.

You can see that if you keep on getting concrete pictures your reading will not lack variety; because it will be full of transitions, transitions not mechanically accomplished, but occurring in the mind before they are expressed.

*Expression* which is outward, must be preceded always by mental *impression*, which is inward.

If your expenditure exceeds your income, the result is bankruptcy, a condition which can never be concealed from the audience who are your creditors.

All of you who have any musical training know that a bar of music cannot be played or sung all in one piece. It must be phrased. It is the phrasing which gives meaning to the music. So in reading.

Now a line can be phrased quite mechanically, or it can be phrased by pictures. For instance, take the line:

"Hark! Hark! on the elm-tree's topmost spray . . ."

You may say, "Oh yes, there are two harks, a phrase for each. And then the rest is another phrase. How delight-



fully simple!?" But wait a moment! Why are there two harks? It is because there are two ideas, otherwise the speaker would say hark but once.

Imagine that you are walking in a garden on a spring morning, like a Corot picture, when the trees are in that delicious laciness between bud and leaf. You hear above you a trill of melody. "Hark!" you say to the friend who is with you, but who stays very much in the background as far as this picture is concerned. "Hark!" you say, your eyes searching the tree-tops. Another trill is heard, and again, "Hark!" (perhaps your friend did not stop talking the first time). Then you see the bird. You may see what bird you like, perhaps a bluebird. First comes a picture of the bird, then of the elm tree, throwing its delicate branches into the air like the spray of a fountain. And there you lose the elm tree and see only its topmost spray, which may suggest to you the literal meaning of a spray of leaves, or the derived meaning of a fountain.

Say the whole line, keeping these or other pictures in mind, losing yourself in them. Then say the line with attention to what you have accomplished in the way of phrasing. You will find that you have made four phrases instead of three, and at each of them you are taking deep breaths.

Hark! Hark! on the elm-tree's topmost spray.

That is the way to phrase, from the inside out.

Try the transition line of Hamlet's: the indifferent, "I am glad to see you well:" changing to the exclamation of surprise and joy, "Horatio — or I do forget myself!"

If your love for Horatio is deep, your pleasure genuine,



your picture of him clear, you will not shriek the word Horatio; but your voice will deepen with emotion.

If your voice is naturally high-pitched, you will discover that not only breathing exercises, but deeper feeling will lower the pitch and give it volume and color.

To accomplish this, memorize poetry that drips beauty like the lines of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*. Say them, picturing each word. Always get into the mood and the atmosphere of your lines. Get a definite picture of settings and circumstances. Fill in the background with a thousand imaginings. Put yourself in the place of the character.

Try these lines for atmosphere or mood:

Now came still evening on, and Twilight grey  
Had in her sober livery all things clad.

Or these:

MRS. CANDOUR. Now I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

LADY TEAZLE. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

MRS. CANDOUR. They'll not allow our friend, Miss Vermillion, to be handsome.

LADY SNEERWELL. Surely she is a pretty woman.

CRABTREE. I am very glad you think so, ma'am.

MRS. CANDOUR. She has a charming fresh colour.

LADY TEAZLE. Yes, when it's fresh put on.

MRS. CANDOUR. O fie! I'll swear her colour is natural. I have seen it come and go.

LADY TEAZLE. I dare swear you have, ma'am. It goes off at night and comes again in the morning.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE. True, ma'am. It not only comes and goes; but what's more, egad! her maid can fetch and carry it.

Or:

PETRUCHIO. What's this? Mutton?



SERVANT. Ay.

PETRUCHIO. Who brought it?

SERVANT. I.

PETRUCHIO. 'Tis burnt; and so is all the meat.

What dogs are these? Where is the rascal cook?

How durst you, villains, bring it from the dresser,

And serve it thus to me that love it not?

There take it to you, trenchers, cups and all;

*(Throws the meat, etc. about the stage)*

You heedless joltheads and unmanner'd slaves!

What, do you grumble? I'll be with you straight.

Or:

KING RICHARD. The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight,  
Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
What! do I fear myself? there's none else by; . . .

Suppose we were to sum up the points to be considered in preparing a dramatic reading. We shall find them arranging themselves something in the manner of Mr. Wilson's famous Fourteen Points.

1. Mood
2. Character
3. Feeling
4. Action
5. Picture quality and value of words
6. Phrasing
7. Transitions
8. Meaning
9. Variety
10. Pitch and tone of voice
11. Unity
12. Naturalness
13. Diction
14. Memorization



LORENZO to JESSICA in Act V of *The Merchant of Venice*:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
 Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night  
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.  
 Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven  
 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;  
 There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
 But in his motion like an angel sings  
 Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims:  
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

### 1. Mood:

The mood of this is moonlight, music, romance. An Italian night, "sweet as honey, and dark as a bowl of wine."

Imagine yourself in an Italian garden. Terraces rise above you, there are dark cypresses, poplars pointing to the sky. Below is Venice. There are marble balustrades which catch the gleam of moonlight. There is the splashing of a fountain. There is a faint fragrance of flowers. There is music. Between two cypresses you see the crescent moon.

### 2. Character:

You are Lorenzo, a young lover. You are Romance. You do not wear the commonplace clothes of to-day. You wear purple velvet, a cloak thrown over one shoulder. You have with you the lovely Jessica with whom you have eloped. She wears a gown of filmy silver that shines in the moonlight. On her little dark head is a Venetian cap of pearls.

### 3. Feeling:

The underlying feeling is romantic love. But upon this fabric is woven a delight in the beauty of the night that becomes almost a feeling of awe. But feeling is at no time deeper than the mood in which the whole passage is keyed. The shadings and transitions in this feeling are discussed under other headings.



## 4. Action:

You have strolled into the garden with Jessica. You look around you at the beauty of the garden and the night. You call Jessica's attention to it all. You sit, or you ask Jessica to sit. You look up at the stars. You listen to the music.

Pantomime all this. Do not let us forget that Jessica is with you.

5. 6. 7. Picture quality and value of words, phrasing, transitions.

Pictures? The first is moonlight: "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank." What is the value of *sleeps* rather than *shines*? Does it not make a difference in your pictures and therefore in your phrasing?

Keep your mind upon the value of each word and the picture that it may suggest; and you will find yourself phrasing as follows:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!"

"Here" — you have found the place in the garden in which you would rather sit — there is a transition to you and Jessica.

"Here will we sit,"

Is not music different from sound? Listen! "and let the sounds of music"

*Creep*, like *sleep*, is another picture word. Shakespeare might have said *sound* or *ring*, which would have waked us from our dream.

"Creep in our ears."

"soft stillness and the night" — Is all stillness soft? Listen to the night. Have you ever heard a summer night sound like the inside of a great bell, when the vibration of ringing is just dying away?

"soft stillness and the night" —

"touches," soft, light, like the words "*creep*" and "*sleep*." And then the increased volume of "*harmony*." "Become the touches of sweet harmony."

Now you have a picture of Jessica. Be sure you see her, and that we also see her. "Sit, Jessica."

Now look above you at the floor of heaven, a vast floor, enormously vast and high, yet to-night not too far away. "Look how the floor of heaven" —



Have you ever seen a mosaic "thick inlaid"? Look at a picture of one of the great mosaics in Italian churches, and you will know what a floor that is "thick inlaid" is like. This one is inlaid with patines (communion bowls, not common bowls) of bright gold. Here Shakespeare slightly mixes his figure; but his imagination was rich enough to bear it, and yours should be too. Be sure that you make the gold bright enough. "Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;"

Now for a particular star. "Orb" gives you a circle, does it not? "There's not the smallest orb" —

"Thou" — here we feel a slight transition to Jessica again, though this time she is small under the stars. Do not do more than barely suggest her presence. "which thou behold'st"

"Motion" — The meaning here goes back to orb and the whole vastness and motion of the spheres. The spheres, the ancients believed, sang as they turned. It is easy to believe that everything is singing on a starry night. "But in his motion" — "but" is merely a cementing word.

Here is an angel with great gold wings. "Like an angel" — Can you hear the music of the spheres in "sings"? "like an angel sings" —

And, as they sing, cherubs with great dewy eyes like cherubs in Raphael's Sistine Madonna, lean from heaven to hear the music of the spheres. "Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims."

Now comes a decided transition. Lorenzo had lost himself and Jessica in the vast brightness of the stars. Now he becomes Lorenzo again, the eternal masculine kindly explaining things to the lady. "Such harmony," he says, (you are still hearing the music) "is in immortal souls."

He has for a moment been carried out of himself by the beauty of the stars and becomes an immortal soul. The awe of this moment we hear in the tone-color of his voice as he says "immortal souls"; but he remembers that he is also a creature of flesh and blood, and he begins to speak of "this muddy vesture of decay." We feel a bit disappointed in him here; but we must make him say the words, not scornfully, but only with regret that in contrast to the stars the clay of the flesh has so little brightness.



“But whilst this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in” —

“We,” now he is back to earth and to Jessica, “cannot hear it.”

You will find that picture and word value, if truly sensed, will take care of phrasing and transition, and binding the whole together will give

#### 8. Meaning:

Not the literal meaning; but the meaning behind the lines — the emotional meaning. For instance, it is not enough to look up “patines” in the dictionary. The tone-color of your voice conveys that “patines of bright gold” are beautiful and sacred. You may understand the literal meaning of “immortal souls,” but you must make us feel the lift of feeling behind it. You must give us the explanatory color of Lorenzo’s tone in the last lines; his return to earth in “muddy vesture of decay”; and in “we cannot hear it” the resumption of his lover’s attitude, which he lost in speaking of the heavens.

#### 9. Variety:

Also you will find that by following the changes in feeling you have given your selection variety. Monotony invariably springs from lack of understanding and feeling. If we talk constantly on one note like a chant, and most of us do, it is because our ideas are all on one note; or because, instead of thinking of the idea we are expressing at the moment, we have taken a mental leap to the next idea. People of an alert nervous mentality often do this. If you are of that sort, go slowly and as the advertisements say, “Kodak as you go.” If you are of the former kind, get some new ideas.

#### 10. Pitch and tone of voice:

Feeling will, also, I think, take care of pitch and tone; if you have not been neglecting the physical side of voice production. Here I should like to say that emphasis — so-called — is never a matter of hitting a word hammerlike with the voice. To emphasize a word is to give it deeper tone color, to phrase it by itself, to raise or lower the pitch according to the feeling (not deliberately raising or lowering the pitch *but letting the feeling raise or lower the pitch*) to give greater volume, always with accompanying color.



## 11. Unity:

Now for the unity of all: mood, character, action, meaning, voice. Is the whole what Shakespeare evidently intended it to be — a romantic picture of two young lovers in an Italian garden transported by the beauty of the night?

## 12. Naturalness:

If your imagination has been true, your understanding of the words clear, your feeling genuine, your phrasing a matter of feeling rather than of punctuation, your transitions actually taking place in your own mind, your characterization free from self-consciousness, then your selection will have naturalness. If it does not, it is a worthless piece of trickery.

Do not get into the habit of listening to yourself. That way dangers lie. Think, feel, work, forget yourself. Criticize others, but let others criticize you. No one can successfully be a good critic and a good actor at the same moment. It has been tried.

Let me make an exception in the matter of diction. There you *must* listen to yourself. But only when you are *practising* words. Never when you are speaking.

## 13. Diction is a point for the next chapter.

14. Do not let your exercises be marred by imperfect memorization. No one can project character or feeling if he is frantically trying to recall the first word of the next line.

## QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. How can a mental condition affect a physical condition? Give illustrations.

2. Is a high-pitched voice ever the result of a mental condition?

3. How do you account for monotonous voices? What is the remedy?

4. What is the meaning of inflection?

5. What effect do fear and anger have on the throat?

6. What is the difference between expression and impression? Which should come first?

7. Practise the following pitch exercise: Take the sentence, "O thou old ocean!" and chant it up and down the scale, saying the whole sentence on each note of the scale. Do it with or without the piano. Add a note to each end of your scale whenever possible. Never strain



the voice. Let the tone *float*. Miss Maud Scheerer, one of the best readers and teachers in this country, declares that *pitch is mental*.

8. Try these selections from Walt Whitman, and note the effect they have on your posture. Try them after a breathing exercise.

- (1) I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.
- (2) Afoot and lighthearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me.  
The long brown path before me, leading  
Where'er I choose.
- (3) And thou, America,  
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above all towering.

9. What is your reaction, pantomimic and vocal, to the following words? Stifled, hill-top, stony, cramped, music, dream, nobility, thirst, blind, declaimed, broken, drudge, stars, sleep, laughter, huddled, stubborn, glory.

Repeat each one three times, expressing three different ideas. Put them into phrases expressing different ideas. This should give you *variety*.

10. Give a selection in different tempos to acquire *variety of tempo*. Memorize several short selections requiring different tempos. For example, "How sweet the moonlight" — is slow in tempo; "When all the world is young, lad" is rapid. Try varying the tempo of the latter; give it very slowly as if it were spoken by a very old man.

11. When you have analyzed and memorized a selection increase your area of *projection* each time you give it. For instance, project your voice mentally to the further wall of the room. Then imagine a still larger area with its limits extending beyond the actual walls of the room, and talk *without effort* to the imaginary wall of that area. Then imagine a still wider area until at last you are projecting to the horizon itself. Stand always in correct posture, breathing from the diaphragm, and feeling that all the emotion of the piece comes from the very *centre of you*. Do this easily, with poise. Again to quote Miss Scheerer, "Let the tone *float*."

12. What is the difference between interpretive *reading* and *acting*? Or between *interpretive* reading and *character* reading?



13. Use *The Twilight Saint* as an exercise in reading. Take the longer speeches of Guido or Lisetta, analyze and memorize them, and give them in class as *character* readings, you as Guido or as Lisetta. Or group together several short speeches of Pia's. Let each member of the class hand in your rating on each one of the fourteen points.

14. Let the instructor assign you, or allow you to choose for yourself, a character from one of Shakespeare's plays, or from a modern play. Memorize and give to the class a characteristic speech of that character's. Let the class discuss your work and hand in ratings.

15. Suggested character readings or character projections: The porter in *Macbeth* (Act II); Grumio, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act IV); Petruchio, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act IV); Touchstone, *As You Like It* (Act V); Rosalind, *As You Like It* (Act IV); Portia, *The Merchant of Venice* (Act I, Sc. ii); Falstaff, First Part of *Henry IV* (Act II, Sc. iv); Bottom, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act IV, Sc. ii or Act V); Puck, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V); Nurse, *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II, Sc. v); Romeo or Juliet, *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II, Sc. ii); Mercutio, *Romeo and Juliet* (Act I, Sc. iv); Capulet, *Romeo and Juliet* (Act III, Sc. v); Ophelia in *Hamlet* (Act IV, Sc. v).

Joan of Arc in *St. Joan* by George Bernard Shaw (the trial scene); Emperor Jones in *Emperor Jones* by Eugene O'Neill; Tom Sawyer Whitewashes the Fence, in *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain; Jane, in *Seventeen* by Booth Tarkington; The Camel Driver in *The Tents of the Arabs* by Lord Dunsany; Tso or Chee Moo or Wu Sin Yin in *The Yellow Jacket*; The Dog or The Cat in *The Bluebird*; Svietlovodoff or Ivanovitch in *The Swan Song* by Chekhov; Mrs. X in *The Stronger* by Strindberg; The Piper or The Wife of Kurt in *The Piper* by Josephine Preston Peabody; François Villon or Louis XI in *If I Were King* by Justin McCarthy; Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*; Rip Van Winkle or Gretchen in *Rip Van Winkle* by Joseph Jefferson; Amanda Afflick in *'Op-o-Me-Thumb* by Richard Pryce; Catherine in *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* by Anatole France; Maurya in *Riders to the Sea* by John Synge; Joe in *The Man on the Kerb* by Alfred Sutro; *Een Napoli* by T. A. Daly, in Anita P. Forbes' collection of modern verse.

Choose a character. Memorize that character's longest and most characteristic speech in the play, or in the act and scene mentioned. Or you may combine two or three shorter speeches.



## CHAPTER NINE

### ACTING A PLAY: DICTION

Of all the attributes of great acting . . . the most sadly neglected is beauty of speech.

— Sheldon Cheney in *The Art Theatre*.

Diction is affected by quality of voice. We Americans are notorious for our high-pitched, nasal voices. There is all the difference between the collective sound of conversation in a roomful of educated Englishmen and that in a roomful of educated Americans that there is between the deep rumble of London and the clang of New York. Have the English, then, deeper feeling than we to give inflection and beauty to the voice? Of course we are not speaking of the cockney with his dropped h's and his "tikes," and "cikes" for "takes" and "cakes." The answer is that the Englishman has greater *leisure* for feeling than we have. He is not so hurried nor so nervous.

In the last chapter we mentioned that the mind should be allowed to dwell on the idea in hand instead of scurrying all over to find an idea in the next sentence. That, in America, we seldom take time to do. Then, too, our climate, with its bracing air and its violent changes, is harder on both voice and temperament than the softer evenness of England. You will notice that our softest voices are from the South, where the climate is mild.

It is not necessary to irritate your fellow-creatures by an unpleasant voice. Proper breathing, cultivation of thought, depth of feeling, serenity of spirit, will transform the most



rasping voice; unless, of course, some irremediable physical defect exists.

This is, however, to speak of quality, which is only part of good diction — the rest being a matter of correct pronunciation. This does not mean that because you can say *bolsheviki* and *fiancée* without stumbling, have given up saying “liberry” and “athaletic,” know the difference between drama and “dramma,” vaudeville and “vawdy-veel” that your pronunciation is correct. You may still say “doncha” and “stoodent” and “itstoobad” and “famly.” Your vowel sounds may be largely incorrect; your consonants negligible and your syllables a mess. Horrible picture! But drawn from real life. A university graduate who taught public speaking was once heard to mispronounce twenty of the commonest words in the English language, in the course of a ten-minute talk.

What should one do about it? Examine carefully your vowels, consonants, syllabification, and accent. Do not omit constant practice, and as they say in nursing, constant care.

Here is a list compiled from class and stage work, a list necessarily short, but containing some of our commonest errors. The list might, of course, be expanded to include the dictionary.

1. Vowel sounds:

long *ā*

māke, cāke, tāke (one syllable, not cay-uk, may-uk),  
āviātion

Short *ă*

ănd, căn, ănt (note spelling), mărry

Italian *ä*

dräma, äunt (note spelling)



à

clàss, àsk, pàth, Frànce, hàlf, càn't

ä

fäll, däughter, wäter

long ē

complēte, pēriod, expērience, bēad, mēat (one syllable, not be-ud, me-ut)

short ě

dwĕll, wĕll (not wăll), yĕs (not yăs), gĕt (not gĭt), forgĕt, hĕlp (not hălp), government, complimĕnt, Hĕlĕn, wrĕstle, ěcellĕnt

long ō

mōst, mōment

short ǒ

gǒd, dǒg, lǒg, ǒbustinate, hǒrrible

long ōō

rōōt, rōōm, sōōn

short ĭ

sĭlk, mĭlk (very short against the front teeth), ĭll, pĭlgrim, rĭnse, cĭvĭl, rĭsk, fĭlm (one syllable)

long ū (yū)

dūke, dūty, tūne, stūdent, Tūesday, constitūtion, pictūre, sūicide, figūre

short ů

jŭst, disgŭst

ew

new (nyew), news, dew

## 2. Consonants:

final consonants

elm, milk, deep, grasp, night, right, sweet, halt, fault, chest, jest, zest, blind, stand, told, words ending in *ing* — fighting, etc.



consonants at the beginning of a word: *wh*, *th*  
*what*, *when*, *which*, *why*, *white*, *whisper*, *the*, *this*,  
*that*, *those*

consonants within the word

government, character, sister, little, bottle, surprise,  
 natural, recognize, library, congratulate

3. Syllabification:

gen-er-al-ly, fam-i-ly, re-al-ly, his-to-ry, jew-el, ru-in,  
 in-ter-est-ing, dif-fer-ent, spir-it, re-pre-sent, prob-  
 a-bly, per-haps, cru-el, bi-ol-o-gy

4. Separation of words:

can't you, don't you, won't you, let you, ought to,  
 have to, it's too bad, sit down, all right.

Be careful of using a secondary accent on words that  
 have only one: *in-ter-est-ing*, not *in-ter-est-ing*, *absolutely*, not  
*absolutely*, *necessary*, not *necessary*, *circumstance*, not  
*circumstance*.

These are a very few of our most ordinary (not ordinary)  
 errors. Remember that a student (not stödent) who is  
 afraid that a too correct pronunciation will make him seem  
 highbrow, is at the same stage of intellectual and social  
 development as the small boy who fears that clean finger-  
 nails and a clean neck will make him look like a "sissy."

### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. What is diction?
2. Make your own list of common errors in diction.
3. What is the pronunciation of address, adult, advertisement,  
 answer, avenue, aviator, because, blue, bouquet, bronze, cafeteria,  
 dancing, detail, economical, extraordinary, fiancé, finance, Florence,  
 forehead, genuine, horror, idea, illustrate, immediately, juvenile,



laboratory, lamentable, laundry, madam, madame, Mary, patronage, penalize, program, rise (noun), soot, stomach, story, suit, variable. In every case consult a dictionary.

Do not be surprised if dictionaries disagree. In case of disagreement your decision will depend largely on your personal preferences. If, for instance, you fancy an English accent, you will take the dictum of the *Oxford Dictionary*. Among the American dictionaries you will doubtless find *Webster* the most conservative, and the *Standard* the most ready to accept colloquial usage or to try newer forms. An excellent book to have on your study table is Phyffe's *Eighteen Thousand Words Commonly Mispronounced*.

4. What is the difference between enunciation and pronunciation?
5. Of what importance is voice quality in business and social life? How is it affected by climate?
6. Suggested special topic: What can be done to correct such speech defects as stammering and lisping?
7. Listen to a speaker on the radio and bring in a report on his diction.



## CHAPTER TEN

### SEEING A PLAY

PUCK. What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;  
An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

A conductor of tourists in Europe used to lead his group very fast uphill, and when they arrived at the top, perspiring, would point to the building they had come to see, say "This is it!" and sit down exhausted. So, having come uphill through "Reading a Play," and "Acting a Play," you come now to "Seeing a Play," and find that most of it can be put into the words, "This is it!" Only you are looking back over the road you have just come.

This means that "Seeing a Play" is largely contained in what we have learned already about reading and acting.

This material might be summarized somewhat in this manner: If we accept our first unsatisfactory definition of a play, as a story capable of being acted, then we have left on our hands the question: Has the play we are seeing a story, and is it capable of being acted, or should it have been left on the library shelf? That question each person will have to settle for himself. If you determine that the play has sufficient action and emotion with other elements of drama, then you will have to decide whether it is *worth acting*, worth the time and labor it has taken to produce, worth your time in coming to see it, and worth the price of your seat. This decision should be made independently of



that price. You can pay five to ten dollars to see many a worthless play, or watch some of the world's best drama for fifty cents.

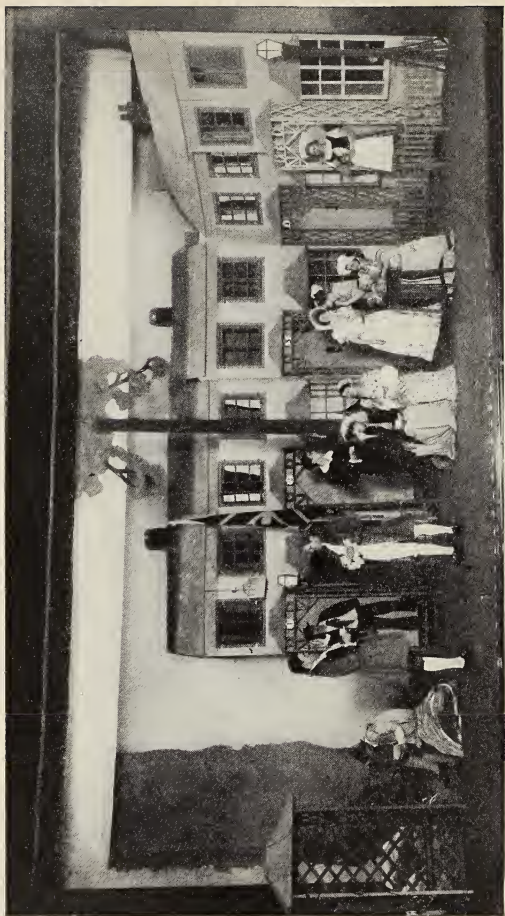
The point is, is the story, after all, worth telling? Is it old and obvious? Has it been done better by many other dramatists? Or, if the story is old, and it probably is (for there are not many new situations under the sun, and certainly not under the floodlights), is it told with new power? Read one of the old plays from which Shakespeare borrowed a plot, and then read the Shakespearean version, if you wish a striking illustration of an old tale made new.

Has the play that you are seeing a theme that is worth discussion? Is the theme in itself dramatic, and has the author succeeded in dramatizing it, making it an essential part of action and character? Or is it merely a piece of propaganda? If the play is so light that you can discover no theme, does it justify itself in having given you a really pleasant evening? Is the flavor of its froth insipid, or poisonous, or really delicious?

What is the author's attitude toward life? Does he tell the truth about it, or is he merely pretending to do so for the sake of the box office? Is he pretending to be frank, and succeeding only in being vulgar? Is he trying to be clever, and being only tiresome? If the author's idea of truth is not your idea of truth (and who can say what the truth is?), is he evidently sincere, the great thing in any art? And has he interested you in his point of view?

Does the story march to its climax and its inevitable conclusion? or does it "peter out" after Act I? Has the writer tricked you by a happy ending, because he thinks you will like it; or dragged in an unhappy one because he





*Photograph by Rich*

SCENE FROM "POMANDER WALK"

The presentation as given in the South High School, Minneapolis. The scenery was made by H. H. Raymond of the manual training department



hopes it will shock you? Is his play full of stage tricks, like the turning up of the long lost brother at the critical moment; and of stage surprises, like the ghostly hand coming through the wall, or has it the surprise of real life and of genuine emotion?

Do you wish to classify the play as a comedy, its humor based on the funny weaknesses of humanity, and its interest lying principally in the characters? Or is it a farce, exaggerated and ridiculous, and chiefly funny for the situation? Or is it melodrama, thrilling, sensational, and objective? Or is it tragedy, serious and emotional, ending in the defeat of its hero?

You do not, of course, labor under the delusion that you can label plays like glasses of jelly, and put them on a shelf, all neat and pretty with their little tags. A play is more often like a conserve, full of all sorts of ingredients. Besides, labels are relatively unimportant. The important thing is not whether a play is called a comedy, but whether the comedy of the play laughs at the real weaknesses of man and womankind or at exaggerated ones. Does it laugh at you bitterly, or with you gaily? Does it cheapen life with a sneer, or make it richer with a humorous understanding? Is its farce truly laughable? Can you laugh till your sides ache (as you should at a farce) without feeling "a silly ass," or calling to mind Mark Twain's epigram, "Man is the only animal that blushes — or needs to." Does the melodrama really thrill, or is it a collection of "old stuff"? Does it say, "Life is all thrills and excitement like this;" or merely, "These are some of the thrills of life;" or, "Here's a rip-snorting melodrama. Ghostly daggers! Ghostly hands! Circular staircases! Come on, you! I dare you not to be thrilled." The merit of the lat-



ter would lie in its frank disclaimer of literary merit and the cleverness with which it lived up to its claim to thrill.

Does the tragedy, if your play is a tragedy, strike deep into the roots of human character and action, or does it stay on the surface of things? Is it inevitable or accidental? Does it ring true or is it faked? Does it give you that sense of awe and exultation that is said to be the essence of all tragedy?<sup>1</sup> Does it move you, or merely make you wish to move?

In treatment, is your play naturalistic, romantic, or symbolistic? Is its naturalism grim, sordid, or pleasing? Is its romance beautiful, idealistic, or sensational? Is the symbolism forced, obscure, or clear? What about the characters in this play? Are they living and true? Are they caricatures, stage types, symbols, photographs? Or do they live as characters created by their author out of the stuff of human emotion and experience? Are they well motivated? Does their action spring from their character and motives, or has the author made them conform to the action of the play? Has he used contrast effectively, or are his people monotonously alike? Are his minor characters well drawn?

Does the dialog sound lifelike? Is it interesting? Poetic, epigrammatic, commonplace, clear? Does it give the author's views of the characters? Does it consistently develop the action, or does it wander? If it wanders, do you forgive it for the sake of its cleverness, humor, or beauty?

You are seeing this play acted. It is time we came to the acting. Is the acting worthy of the play? Perhaps it is better — or worse. Is the play worth while because of the acting or the acting worth while because of the play? Per-

<sup>1</sup>Edith Hamilton in the *Theatre Arts Monthly*, January 1926.



haps you praise or reject both. Again, don't judge the actor by the price you paid to see him, or by the amount of electricity used to spell his name on the sign over the door.

Are the actors truly creating characters that live before you? Characters that have never lived before in just this form? For if there is anything that creation means it is newness. Burbank could not create a rose. But he could take the already created rose and produce a variety which should be distinctly his own, bearing his name, and yet differing in no way from a rose. When the actor takes a character already created (by the author), he should make of him, without altering his material, a new character — created by the actor.

Are the actors acting by tricks, or is there sincerity in every line and every piece of "business"?

Let me emphasize again what is meant by acting by tricks. An actor may use his voice to show sorrow with no feeling behind it, and trick an audience merely by the "sob stuff," without genuineness of emotion. Or a comedian in horse-play or slapstick may fall down simply to get a laugh. Or the hero may smoke a cigarette, because he can't think of anything else to do; or to show off his diamond ring. A turn of voice, a gesture, or business which is employed simply to gain an effect without being otherwise motivated is "hokum." Two people bumping into each other on the stage is hokum. A lighted match held until it burns the fingers, or the bashful lover gradually sliding up to embracing distance is hokum and "old stuff." Few farces or melodramas exist without hokum. Some of it is good, if it is used frankly as hokum and not as serious business.

Does the actor's reading of the lines please you? Has it



character, meaning, variety, and naturalness? Is his voice rich with true feeling or harsh, dry, and monotonous? If harsh, is the harshness assumed for character? Do you like his interpretation of the character?

Does the actor "*project*"? That is, does his character get over the footlights into your own consciousness? *Projection* is the power of getting a character, an idea, an emotion across to an audience. Projection is to an actor like Maggie's charm in *What Every Woman Knows*: "If you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have." If your actor is a professional, he does, of course, project more or less clearly; for it is required of the professional that he shall project. If he did not, no director or manager would let him live, although they are not always so fussy about the quality of his projection.

You will find that amateurs are generally lacking in this important quality of projection. An amateur may have understanding of the character, he may have feeling; but either his feeling is not deep enough, or his body is not a sufficiently well-trained medium, or he is afraid to let himself go, or he plays too fast, or on too small a scale, or his voice is weak, or he has not a sufficient sense of audience. Any of these will make him underplay his part, and fail to project. All of these defects combined in one person is, on the stage, a spectacle too awful for tears.

Four qualities which either do not count at all, or are imperfectly perceived when you read a play to yourself, become conspicuous as you see a play. They are: pitch, tempo, rhythm, and unity.

By *pitch* we mean the key in which a play is set. By *tempo*, the speed at which it is played. As in music, all



must be in key. As in music, the key sometimes changes within the piece. For instance, in *Macbeth*, the drunken porter is played in a slightly different key from the rest of the piece. But, and this is important, the actor who plays the porter must never forget that the key of the whole is tragedy. He must never exaggerate the humor of his part to the key of farce.

Farce is pitched in a very high key, and played at a very rapid tempo — prestissimo. Tragedy is in minor with a slower movement — largo. Comedy is in a light key with a quick movement. It is not so fast as farce — allegretto or scherzo, one might say. Melodrama is on a lower note than farce or comedy, but not in minor. Its tempo varies, usually it is played fast.

Speed is gained, not as the amateur often imagines, by rapid talking, but by rapid picking up of cues. This becomes sometimes mechanical and snappish; but even so is not so melancholy as dragging cues, than which nothing is sadder nor more sleep-producing. Sometimes a piece loses tempo in the hands of amateurs by slow entrances; and sometimes, even with professionals, by too prolonged business. This last usually occurs when an actor wishes to center attention on himself, and overemphasizes his part.

If we seem for a moment to have left the audience and to have jumped upon the stage, it is only that when we have gone back to our seats we may watch the play more closely. Are your actors pitching the play in the right key, and are they playing it in the right tempo? A farce pitched in tragedy key and played in tragedy tempo is the saddest thing on earth. One might as well dance to a funeral march.



If pitch and tempo are right, the play should have *rhythm*, though rhythm is more than pitch and tempo. When the actors are in tune with the play, the audience is conscious of a certain swing or rhythm. This is particularly marked in ensemble scenes, or in scenes where there are many exits and entrances. Entrances and exits may be made to swing with the balance of a minuet. A farce which, when well played (as it seldom is by amateurs), has remarkable rhythm is *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, with all its entrances and exits. An ensemble scene whose rhythm fairly carries the audience with it is the wedding scene in Act II of *Peer Gynt*.

There is a rhythm of grouping, a rhythm of movement on the part of the individual actor, and a rhythm of the play as a whole, which brings us to ask this question, Has the play *unity*?

Are the actors working together and with the authors? Is their audience in sympathy with both? Is every scene a fragment by itself, or an integral part of a larger scene? Does everything in the play contribute to one central impression? If all these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then the play has unity indeed.

If the play is a "period" play, dated, that is, definitely in a certain historical period, do we get a satisfying sense of that period? Does a performance of *The School for Scandal*, for example, not only in costumes and sets, but in manner, voice attitudes, and characterization, reflect the eighteenth century as in a polished mirror? Is Stark Young successful in giving us a feeling of medieval Italy in *The Twilight Saint*?

You may not be quite ready to appreciate unity until we have had the next chapter, which deals with the setting of a play.



Diagram of a trapezoidal apron with the following labels and measurements:

- Up**: Top edge label.
- Down**: Bottom edge label.
- Apron**: Bottom curved edge label.
- Scenium Arch**: Label pointing to the bottom curved edge.
- Measurements (Left Side)**:
  - Top-left corner: R.U.E. or R.3.E. 3.
  - Middle-left corner: R.2.E. 2.
  - Bottom-left corner: 1. E. or R.1.E. 1.
- Measurements (Right Side)**:
  - Top-right corner: 3. L.3.E. or L.U.E.
  - Middle-right corner: L. 2. L.2.E.
  - Bottom-right corner: 1. L.1.E. or L.D.E.
- Internal Labels**: R., R.C., C., L.C., L.

The part of the stage from the set to the footlights is called the proscenium; and the arch, in which the curtain is hung, curved or rectangular as the case may be, is the proscenium arch. The part in front of the curtain is known as the apron. Some stages have none, just as some stages use no footlights. Seldom, except in vaudeville, is



an actor allowed on the apron during the play. He must stay within the frame of his picture, which is the proscenium arch.

### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. If you have not already read *My Lady's Rose* on page 222, do so and answer in regard to it the questions in the preceding chapter which concern tragedy. Is a happy ending possible here?

2. Apply the questions on comedy and farce to *The Weather Breeder* and *The Proposal*. Is there any "hokum" in either of these?

3. Is the melodrama of *A Night at an Inn* "hokum," or otherwise? When does melodrama misrepresent life? When doesn't it?

4. Give in pantomime some examples of tricks or "hokum." Can you give any examples of plays where tricks are used with good effect? Do you know, for instance, the "planting" of stolen articles in *Stop Thief*? Is the kiss in *The Weather Breeder* "hokum"? Is the thunder "hokum"?

5. What is meant by stage "business"? Illustrate "too prolonged business." Illustrate "picking up cues."

6. Discuss character projection. Should you think of your audience when trying to project a character?

7. Choose two groups of three students each from the class. Let one group present a character projection from *The Proposal*. Let another group act the play. Let the rest of the class review their presentation.

8. Let the whole class work on *The Proposal* as an exercise in tempo. Work also on the exits and entrances, seeking to acquire rhythm.

9. What special difficulties does farce present to the amateur actor? Is *The Proposal* a slapstick farce? Is there slapstick in it? Can you think of examples of slapstick farces?

10. What questions asked in the preceding chapter would apply as well to screen plays?

11. Make a study of a film performance according to the suggestions in Chapter X.

12. Do the same for an amateur performance or for a theatrical performance.



13. Read play reviews by some of the best newspaper reviewers: Gilbert Gabriel of the *American*, Percy Hammond of the *Herald-Tribune*, J. Brooks Atkinson of the *Times*, Burns Mantle of the *Daily News*, all of New York; H. T. Parker of the *Boston Transcript*; Stark Young of the *New Republic*; Robert Benchley of *Drama*; William McDermott of the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*. Alexander Woollcott, formerly of the *New York World*, is at present a free-lance.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### SEEING A PLAY: STAGECRAFT

CHORUS. In my august fancy I painted the scenes.

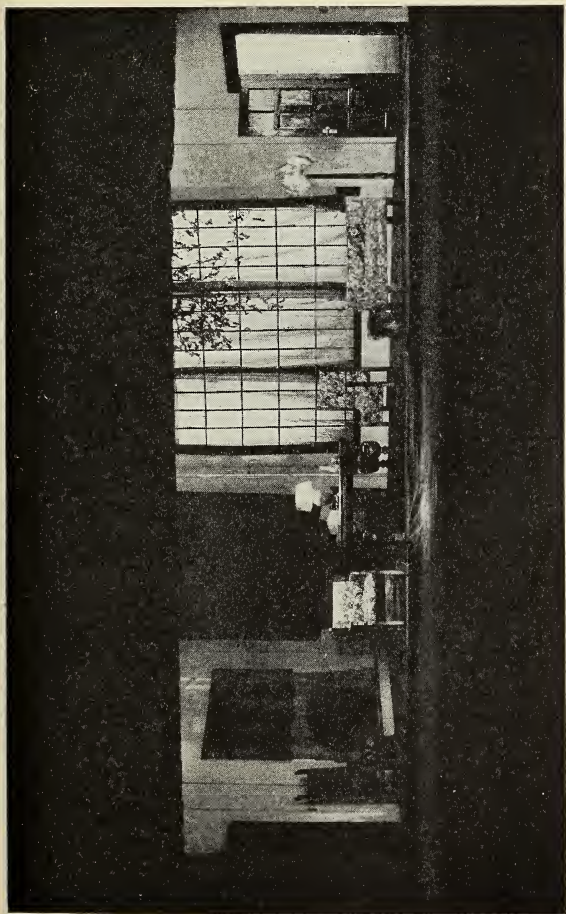
— *The Yellow Jacket.*

The most remarkable development of recent years in the field of dramatics has been in scenery or stagecraft. Not so many years ago canvas scenery, such as you sometimes find now in the town "op'ry house" (namely, three sets — two interiors painted with huge scrolls and roses that never grew on vine or bush, and one backdrop, misrepresenting a forest with gnarled trunks and a set of wood-wings) was all the setting almost any play required. But as life grew more complex and expensive, so also did scenery; and canvas sets and backdrops multiplied and were elaborated until the climax was reached in such plays as *Ben Hur* with its carloads of scenery.

All this was expensive and cumbersome in building, setting up, and transportation. But it was worse than that; at its best it was unbeautiful and unimaginative. Try as the scene-painters might, the canvas trees never looked like real trees, the painted drops never gave the illusion of space and sky.

There arose, then, when the scenery orgy was at its height, three men, Adolphe Appia in Switzerland, Gordon Craig in England, and Max Reinhardt in Germany, who said, "This will never do!" It was Gordon Craig who spoke most emphatically, and in 1913 said something to





### THE GYPSY TRAIL

The scene for the first and third acts as given at the Mechanic Arts High School, St. Paul, Minnesota. The furniture, including the lamps and shades, was all built at Mechanic Arts



this effect: "All this attempt at naturalism is really very costly, clumsy, hideous, and crippling to the imagination; and it does not, after all, look real. Let us give up the fruitless effort to reproduce nature, and say frankly to our audiences: 'we are not trying to imitate a forest, or rebuild the interior of a house; we are merely going to suggest forest or house. It is for you, the audience, to construct in your imagination the kind of forest or house that you think this is.'"

Thus was established the first principle of modern stagecraft: Scenery should *suggest* rather than imitate.

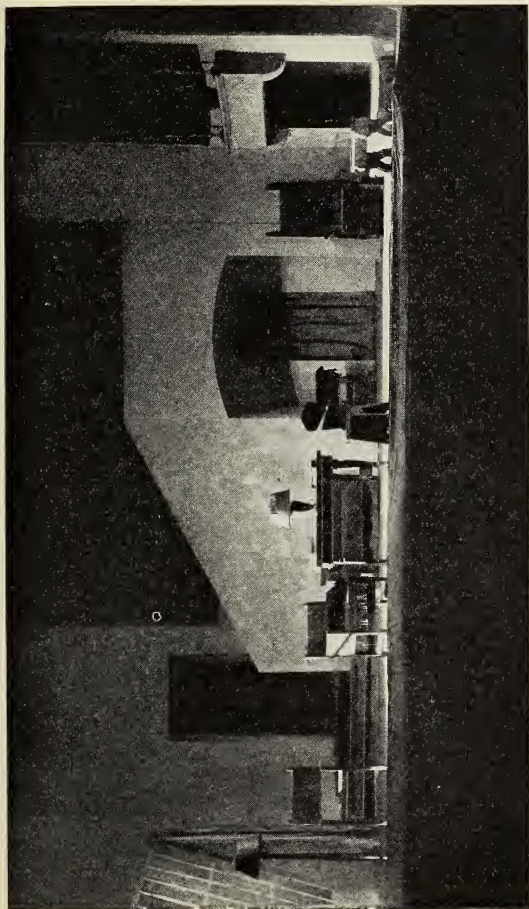
A jade-colored bowl of cherry blossoms against a silver screen suggests Japan as well as could seven carloads of scenery. More than suggesting, the bowl and screen allow your imagination to wander in Japan, while the seven carloads of scenery limit your imagination. And think how much easier to purchase, set up, or transport a screen and bowl of cherry blossoms!

This brings us to our second principle of modern stagecraft: Settings should be *simple*.

They should be simple, not only for the reasons just given — that they are less expensive (though of course simplicity is not always cheap) and less clumsy; but because lack of simplicity obtrudes itself into the play. It makes you forget the play and think only of the scenery. That is like forgetting a person, and thinking only of her clothes.

David Belasco, who is a producer of the naturalistic group, whose settings are marvels of beautifully detailed reproduction, generally discards the principle of simplicity. He often puts his audience into the position of the man who couldn't see the forest for the trees. In the last act of





ROLLO'S WILD OAT

The setting and furniture were made by the Mechanic Arts High School, St. Paul, Minnesota



*The Governor's Lady*, in which the set is an exact reproduction of the interior of a Childs' restaurant, the audience were so thrilled by the exactness of the reproduction and so interestedly saying to one another, "Look! Isn't that perfect!" that they quite forgot the governor and his lady; and most of them left the theatre without knowing whether the play ended happily or not.

Scenery is a background; and backgrounds should be simple. Grouping and costuming are quite ineffective before a messy background. Every show-window decorator knows that, and puts his most glittering ware before a simple drapery of dark velvet.

Scenery also should be "expressive." That is, while it is a background, it is a background that should express the play. If the play is romantic, then the scenery should express the richness and color of romance. If it is grim and terrible, then the background should express grimness and terror. If fantastic, the background should be unusual or grotesque. If you can, look up the July, 1922 number of the *Theatre Arts Monthly* and see the settings by Woodman Thompson. They are a perfect background for *Romeo and Juliet*. They are simple. Observe how the three arches occur in different arrangements in each set. They are dignified, as becomes the mood of Shakespeare; they are appropriately Italian for period, and they are romantic for the love theme. H. Th. Wijdeveld's sets for *Hamlet* (*Theatre Arts*, January 1921) express sobreness as well as dignity, the single arch with its draperies being heavier than the three arches of Woodman Thompson's.

If you saw *The Thief of Bagdad* in the films, you will recall that they endeavored to express not only the Orient, but the fanciful character of the story as well. Much use



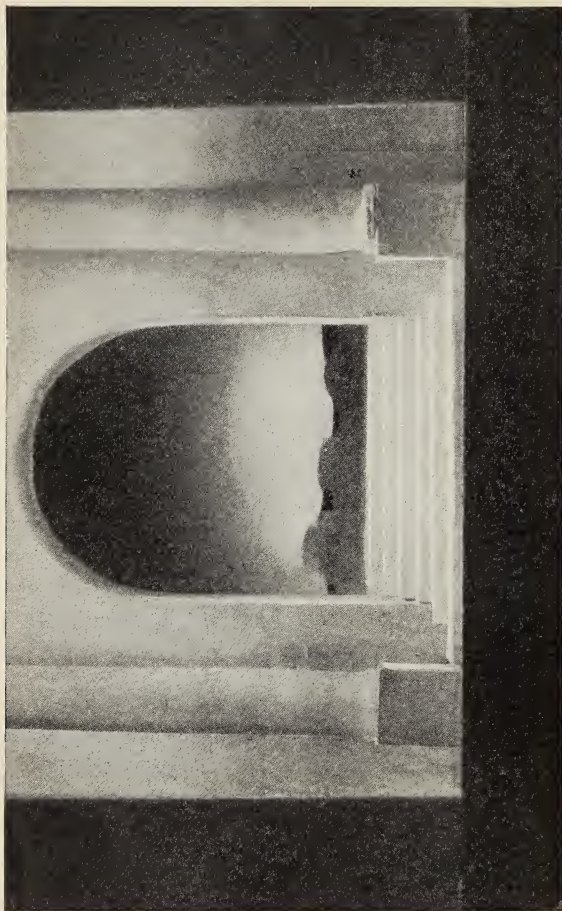
was made of stairways. Stairways are not only picturesque, but usually have a dramatic suggestion — such good places they are for escapes, assassinations, and ambush. *The Thief of Bagdad* stairways were seldom practical, but always expressive. *The Thief of Bagdad* is hardly a practical tale.

In *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, one of the first examples of expressive scenery used in the films, the houses were weirdly distorted and twisted to express the madness of Dr. Caligari. The sets for John Howard Lawson's play *Processional* represent the jazz of the play in their fantastic colors and broken rhythms, as the play itself purported to express a jazz medley of American life.

It is possible, of course, to carry suggestion and expressiveness to such lengths that the scenery obtrudes itself to a greater extent than the clumsy, so-called naturalistic type. Often the suggestion is so obscure that no one knows what the designer is trying to express. One critic said the exterior of the castle in a certain setting of *Macbeth* suggested to him nothing but a newly extracted tooth. It was doubtless meant to express a tortured spirit; but it failed to get its idea to the audience, and by attracting puzzled attention to itself, detracted from the idea of the play.

You will often see the terms impressionistic and expressionistic applied to scenery. Both are used to denote scenery that expresses the play. Each of them denotes a different sort of expressiveness. They are not used here; because it is unprofitable for the amateur to split hairs of definition, when all he really needs to know is that scenery can and should express the mood and meaning of a play. Let us call scenery that does so, whether it be impressionistic or expressionistic, *expressive* scenery.





MODEL OF CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SETTING  
Made by Ralph Smalley, Mechanic Arts High School, St. Paul, Minnesota



The fourth principle of settings is harmony; harmony with the theme, the atmosphere, the emotion, and the action of the play.

Every moment of a play should be a picture and in this picture the scenery should play its harmonious part. One of the most striking expressions of this principle is the famous production of *The Miracle* in New York and Chicago. The whole interior of a theatre was torn out and replaced by the interior of a Gothic cathedral. Thus the idea and atmosphere of the play were so perfectly expressed that the audience found themselves seated not in a theatre, but in a vast, dim, incense-fragrant cathedral; the action of the play taking place in the aisles and around the altar, which occupied the position usually filled by the stage. You will say that while this was suggestive, expressive, and marvellously harmonious, it could hardly be called simple, and you may be right!

Norman Bel-Geddes, one of the designers of this production, has made a notable name in American stagecraft. Robert Edmond Jones, Lee Simonson, Woodman Thompson are others. Max Reinhardt, who with Norman Bel-Geddes designed *The Miracle*, is the chief figure in Germany and one of the pioneers in stagecraft. Adolphe Appia in Switzerland was perhaps the first to practise the principles of the new art, while Gordon Craig in England was the first to bring those principles to the attention of the theatrical and artistic world. Granville Barker is another Englishman whose work is of great importance.

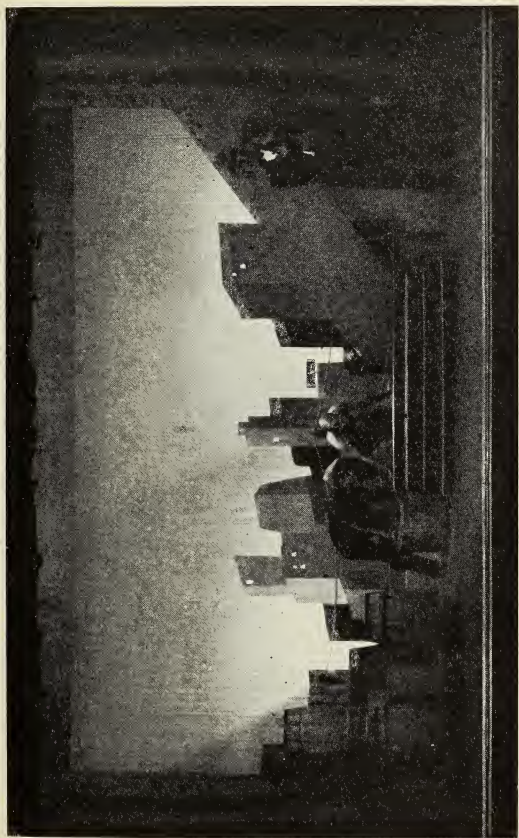
Is expressive scenery appropriate to every play? Scenery should always express something of the mood and meaning of the play; but that does not mean that it must be fanciful, poetic, or grotesque. If the play is naturalistic, the setting



may also be naturalistic. Plays like *Milestones*, or *The First Year* would be as out of place in grotesque or poetic sets as a woman in flowing draperies would be on the golf links or in an office. But there is no reason why a naturalistic set should not be simple, suggestive, harmonious. It is evident that *The Show-Off* requires a naturalistic set. The room in Aubrey's house cannot be beautiful; for it would not then express the idea of the play. But it can be simple. Every piece of furniture used should express — what? Commonplaceness and a desire to show-off. Ordinarily plain backgrounds are best; but plain backgrounds mean good taste, and would Aubrey be conspicuous for good taste? One might suggest his show-off character by adding to a plain background a showy, highly-colored border; or one might employ an overdecorated screen. On the other hand, the setting for *My Lady's Rose*, while it must certainly not be pretty, may suggest a sort of beauty. There, while the background should be plain, dingy, discolored; the furniture battered and ugly; an old quilt or a ragged curtain might have a coppery-brown or dull red that would give to the set a hint of beauty while not detracting from its poverty and ugliness.

Modern stagecraft has made the life of the scene-shifter a happier one; for in its aim at simplicity it usually seizes upon a simple background, which remains during the play, changes being made in the foreground to indicate change of scene. You can see such a background in Wijdeveld's *Hamlet* set, a simple arch, which when hung with tapestry becomes a chamber in the castle; and when the curtains are removed, showing a plain backdrop, and steps and battlements are placed in front, becomes the outside of the castle. In Sothorn and Marlowe's beautifully staged





**"EPISODE ON A WATERFRONT"**  
Staged by the Masquers of the University of Minnesota



Shakespearean productions the permanent background consists of three arches. Closed, they may present a wall; open, a loggia, doorway or street; draped, a room. George Arliss' recent production of *The Merchant of Venice* made use of three arches with wonderful effect.

Often the background is merely a cyclorama or curtain hung in a semicircle. Moveable pieces of scenery may be used in front of this, and by the use of lights a great variety of effects are obtained. Sometimes this semicircular background or cyclorama is of plaster, which by reflected lights gives a wonderful illusion of space and distance. Few who saw it will forget the grey cyclorama of gauze used for mist in *Emperor Jones*.

Gordon Craig was the first to employ screens for backgrounds. Their simplicity and flexibility make them most desirable. They are used effectively by the various art theatres of the country.

If modern stagecraft has made the life of the scene-shifter happier, it has increased a thousandfold the troubles of the electrician. For modern scenery depends largely for its effect on lighting. Outgrowing the simple row of border lights and footlights of forty years ago, we now have a bewildering glitter of floodlights, bunchlights, striplights, spotlights, and light-towers of all sizes, with all colors; till the stage is a mass of wiring and the switchboard as complex as a piano. The subject of lighting is far too technical for this book. Those of you who are interested in electrical effects will do well to conduct individual research and to construct and light a model stage. Painting with light is a fascinating art; for art it has now become. Scenery may even be projected on backdrop, cyclorama, or flats by means of light. The lovely leafy effect in



Woodman Thompson's *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scene is light, or rather shadow projection. (See reproductions in *Theatre Arts*, July 1922.)

While we are looking at a play, we must not forget that costumes, like scenery, are part of the play, in general they follow the same principles: simplicity; expression of the idea of the play, of the character who wears them, and of the period; and harmony with the whole. A costume, while it should always be appropriate to the character who wears it, must take into consideration also the group as a whole; the background against which it is placed; the light in which the scene is played; and the idea of the play as a whole. In any act the effect of which is sombre and low-keyed, and where browns, greys, dull greens, and copper reds are used, a bright pink costume, no matter how charming, would be as out of place as a bathing-suit at tennis. Also the same pink would not look well if the wearer were being made love to by an orange-clad gentleman; nor would the idea of pink express Lady Macbeth.

Costuming, like scenery, should not call attention to itself.

Deep colors are ordinarily better than the crude color. Chinese red, brick red, Pompeiian red are, for example, usually better than a crude scarlet. Always the effect of lights must be considered. Amber light, for instance will make a brilliant red look ashen. Greens and blues are likely to interchange values under lights, and lavender unless it be decidedly a pinkish lavender, to look grey.

Modern stagecrafting and expressive scenery are the greatest of all boons to the amateur actor and the community theatre. Not only is simple, suggestive scenery cheaper, easier to construct, and less clumsy; but the use of a cyclo-



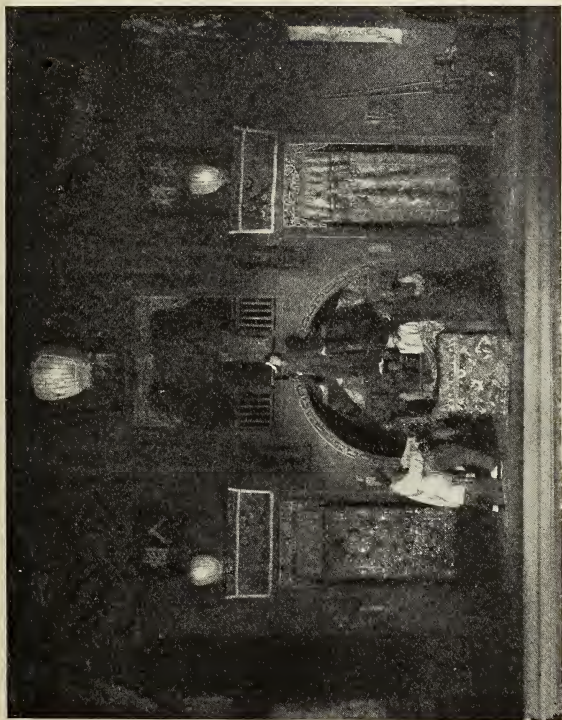
rama or other simple permanent background makes it possible for amateurs to produce Shakespeare's plays, or other plays of many scenes. It lightens that curse of the amateur play, long waits between acts and a midnight closing hour. The newer scenery is more beautiful in its simplicity, takes light better, makes simple costuming more effective, and permits the use of imagination.

While we are on the subject of stagecrafting, each one of you should construct a miniature set, either for a play in this book, or for one act of a play that appeals to your imagination. Select a poetic and imaginative play, rather than a naturalistic one, and use suggestiveness and expressiveness in your set, rather than an attempt at naturalism. You will do yourself greater justice. And if some unkind person in the class says, "That moon doesn't look real," you can always retort with dignity, "It isn't supposed to!"

Your set should be made to scale. The standard height for stage scenery is sixteen or fourteen feet. With this for your unit you can calculate the proportions of your stage. Or you may wish to construct a stage in the dimensions of the stage in your own auditorium. Or if your classroom is equipped with a model stage for experimental purposes, make a set adapted for that.

You may make your stage out of pasteboard and use fabrics from the ragbag. But see that the colors are right. Don't use just *any* blue; get the right blue. A few color suggestions are: blue for distance, space, loveliness; purple for romance, dreams, pomp, passion, death; red for comedy, villainy, bloodshed, terror; green for out-of-doors, spring, poetry, or a "bilious" green for jealousy and malice; grey for mist, monotony, a brooding quiet. These are merely suggestions. As a matter of fact, you can do any-





THE YELLOW JACKET

Mr. and Mrs. Coburn in the play by Hazelton and Benrimo, — at the end of Act One



thing with colors on the stage if you do it right! Know what you want to express. If you can't find the right colors in fabrics you have at hand, experiment with dyes.

Black gives accent and contrast. Dead white should almost never be used, and pastel colors must be used with care. They are likely to look washed out.

Read your play many times before beginning the set and study the principles of this chapter carefully. Study illustrations of stage sets, but do not copy them. The *Theatre Arts Monthly* reproductions of sets are particularly good.

#### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Explain the difference between modern stagecraft and the old method. Discuss the principles of expressive scenery.

2. Tell briefly how you would set some of the old fairy stories: "Cinderella," "Aladdin," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Bluebeard."

3. Discuss lights and costumes for the above.

4. Do the same for some of the Shakespeare plays.

5. Costume some dolls as Shakespearean characters; or draw designs for the costumes.

6. Make sets for the plays in this book.

7. Construct a model stage.

8. Suggested projects for those specially interested in stagecraft: Make a marionette theatre with marionettes. Read Tony Sarg's book on marionettes.

9. Suggested topics for themes: The Stage in Shakespeare's Time; The Clavilux or Color-Organ; Art Theatres and Their Aims; The New York Theatre Guild; The Chinese Theatre. This last topic contains much food for thought and discussion. If you have access to *The Yellow Jacket* by Hazelton and Benrimo, produce a scene from it in class.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### SEEING A PLAY: ACTING

Trusting to the inspiration of the moment is like trusting to a shipwreck for your first lesson in swimming.

— G. H. Lewes in *Actors and Acting*.

It is time for someone to remark, "But if we were to keep our minds on all the principles of the last two chapters, it would destroy our pleasure. Playgoing or amateur theatricals would cease to be fun." Does it destroy your pleasure in eating an egg to know a good egg from a bad one? It does, to be sure, destroy your pleasure in eating a bad one. But that is desirable. Isn't it true that the man who knows the rules has more pleasure in watching a football game than the girl to whom the rushes, passes, downs are only a jumble of mass movements? Also, the man who knows the rules gets more out of playing the game than one who just wants to kick the ball around.

To the true lover of plays the fun consists in knowing something of the game. But we must be careful about speaking of drama as if it were a game with fixed and unbreakable rules. No art is a matter of rule. Always the genius of the artist may make its own. This book is concerned only with a few simple principles of acting and of criticism. You are not an enthusiast for plays either as participant or audience, if a consideration of these principles spoils the illusion.



*Illusion* — the sense that what is taking place on the stage is real at the moment — that is what the actor must give you. That is what you must give an audience if you are the actor. What you are seeing or what you are doing need not look like the thing in real life. If you expect that, you are like the person who thinks the picture on the tomato can is the finest art, because it looks most like a real tomato. There is a vast difference between what takes place on the stage and what takes place in real life. If you were to move and talk on the stage in the haphazard manner of real life, it would not look real. In fact, it would seem the most unreal performance imaginable.

But the actor must make it *seem real* to you for the moment. He must make you forget the theatre and the play; and think only of what he is portraying. He must give you *illusion*.

How can he do this? How can you, if you are putting on a play, create for the audience that temporary illusion, so that your emotion moves them, your action carries them with it? Sometimes you may have heard a child in the audience cry, "Oh, don't let them hurt him!" That child is getting the illusion perfectly.

In the first place, you give the audience illusion by having it yourself. No story can ever seem real to the audience, unless it has first seemed real to the player. Not at the moment, perhaps, when he is acting. But there must have been a moment when the thing seemed real. When you were children and made a train of cars out of the dining-room chairs, it was to you a real train of cars. It hurt your dignity as engineers to have someone stand carelessly in front of your engines or allude to them as chairs. That was because you had the illusion of a train.





#### ILLUSION

Two high-school students as Mytyl and Tyltyl in *The Bluebird*. With a curtain for a background, a waste-basket for a bird-cage, in school-made costumes, they are creating the illusion



This same childlikeness of spirit must be in every actor. The feeling must be responsive, the mind receptive as it is in children. Certain plays like *The Yellow Jacket* and *The Bluebird* bring out this childlikeness. They cannot be acted well by any group, amateur or professional, who are just *pretending* to be children. They will succeed as well as grown-ups usually do. Even if their grown-up minds think it all silly, their unconscious minds must respond to the child-spirit of these imaginative plays.

In the *Our Gang* farce-comedies of the films, the "Gang" *seems* to be playing the game with all their hearts. The moment a grown-up comes into the picture the illusion is lost.

Acting is done with *the unconscious mind*. If you have to stop to think on the stage what your character would do under certain circumstances, then you are not acting; any more than you are driving if you have to think about every turn of wheel. In both cases the unconscious mind is functioning, if the thing is well done.

"Shouldn't you think about your character?" someone says. Well, rather! Days, weeks, months, years if possible. Just as when you were learning to drive you concentrated all your attention on the manipulation of the steering-wheel. All possible concentration should precede your portrayal of character. But you should not present that character to an audience till he is part of your unconscious acts and feelings any more than you should drive your family through traffic till you can unconsciously turn your car in the right direction. Neither in driving nor in acting, however, should you take your mind off your job.

If your character does not live for you so that he is unconsciously a part of you, then you can never make him



live for anyone else. To some people this unconscious assimilation of the thoughts and feelings of an imaginary character comes very quickly, with very little conscious effort. To some it never comes at all.

Is an actor, then, unconscious of his audience? As individuals, yes. The moment you begin to speak to an audience — except in vaudeville, which has a different technique — then you are out of character, and look as foolish as the high-school girl in the class play who glances around to see if her friends are looking at her. On the other hand, you must not forget that you have an audience, and that what you say and do must reach them. This sense of audience, which in the professional develops into a sixth sense — but which does not, if he is more than a mountebank, make him strut on the one hand or become self-conscious on the other — comes with difficulty to the amateur. It can, however, be acquired.

In Sacha-Guitry's play *Deburau* the old comedian, Deburau, gives this advice to his son, who is about to go on the stage for the first time.

Shake in your shoes in your dressing room;  
Feel sure you've forgotten  
Your part; that you're rotten  
In what you remember. Turn so pale  
That rouge won't redden you. Be certain you'll fail.  
Walk forth as a criminal walks to his doom —  
But, once on the scene —  
Once the bell starts to ring and the curtain to rise,  
Let your fright fly away with it up to the flies;  
Once you're over the brink  
If you must think of yourself at all, think  
You're the greatest actor the world's ever seen!



Now, remember this. Play light,  
 And be simple; be sincere,  
 But never be trite.  
 And never, oh never  
 Try to be — or to seem — too clever.  
 What you mean, when you do it, must of course be quite clear.  
 And it must seem quite clear what you're *going* to do.  
 For an audience must always feel sure of you,  
 Yet, when you do it, it must seem accidentally done.  
 . . . . always do  
 Whatever comes most naturally to you.

. . . .  
*Think, think hard, think intensely*  
 That you are in love, or in a fright,  
 Then, when you can't keep still any longer,  
 When your feeling grows stronger  
 Than you are, still hold yourself tensely  
 And steep yourself in it  
 For the millionth part of a minute,  
 Then — let yourself go,  
 And it'll come right.

. . . .  
 Don't copy anyone.

. . . .  
 I tell you it's an art.

### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Does an actor always experience a feeling at the moment when he is portraying it? You cannot settle this question, but it is interesting to weigh the evidence on both sides. Read, if you can get it, De Wolf Hopper's article on acting in *The Saturday Evening Post* for December 5, 1926; and Richard Boleslavsky on "Fundamentals of Acting" in the *Theatre Arts Monthly* for February, 1927.
2. Illustrate the workings of the unconscious mind in learning to play the piano, or in swimming.
3. Discuss *illusion* on the stage.
4. Write a theme on Illusion in Childhood.



5. Present the first part of *A Night at an Inn* as it might be done in real life. Make no effort to be heard; make no attempt at grouping; pay no attention to cues or tempo. Just "be natural." Report on the unnatural effect.

6. Present the same scene with a different group who have rehearsed it as a *play*. Compare the two presentations.

7. *Your project now is acting*. Directions for the production of the one-act plays are to be found with the plays. If they are produced publicly arrangements must be made for royalty.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### AUDIENCE AND ACTOR

You give me . . . and . . . I give you.

— Adolphe Appia.

MRS. PAMPINELLI. I don't think the audience noticed it.

— *The Torchbearers*.

This preachy chapter points out to you a certain responsibility, first as one of an audience; second, as one of a class or amateur organization about to produce a play.

(1) "You give me . . . and . . . I give you." This is the motto which Adolphe Appia, designer and director, would have over the doors of every playhouse.<sup>1</sup> It expresses the intimate relation which should exist, and which seldom does exist, between the audience and the actor. The modern audience, as Appia says, has no idea of "giving." Their attitude is that of "taking." They have paid for their seats, and they sit back, saying, "Now give me my money's worth." They have come, most of them, with no thought of the play. A farce is to them the most entertaining form of play; so they turn everything into a farce. They must have a laugh. Beautiful scenes are spoiled by the raucous cackles of an audience that doesn't know what the play is about; an audience that feels that the best way to get its money's worth is to cackle. On the other hand the responsive audience does exist, and may be drawn into the spirit of the play.

<sup>1</sup>Interview by Barnet Braverman in *The Billboard*, September, 1926.



Stuart Walker, in *Six Who Pass while the Lentils Boil*, and others of his *Portmanteau Plays*, has tried to develop an interchange of sympathy between the actors and the audience by the device of a Prologue who should remain on the stage, interpreting the play, and responding to questions asked by a member of the cast seated in the audience. But no device can take the place of sympathetic responsiveness on the part of the audience.

In another way you students of drama have a responsibility as an audience. It is true that the theatre of to-day is commercial; it is true that there are many stupid plays, vulgar plays, vicious plays; it is often true that managers are guilty of trying to force these down the public throat. But managers are not in business for their health; if they have found the public swallowing eagerly they can scarcely be blamed for offering eagerly the plays that pay the best. If the worst pays the best, whose fault is that, they ask? So if you go to poor "shows" just to kill time, or because you do not know that they are poor; if out of indifference, you go to something silly; and, out of curiosity to something vicious, neglecting what is beautiful, is it not partly your fault that the silly and the vicious are conspicuous on the stage or in the films?

If you are a member of a class or group which is preparing to put on a play, and almost every group is always at the point of doing so, you should stand for the production of a play that is worth producing. Your class work will largely consist of plays in this book; but what about your class play, or the play of your dramatic organization? Are you going to turn down every serious suggestion with, "Oh, that's highbrow stuff!" Or shall you vote for something that is in itself beautiful, and worth the time,



money, and effort that the production of any play is bound to cost?

The day has long since passed when high schools and dramatic clubs put on *Mr. Bob*, and *What Happened to Jones*, and thought well of themselves.

Appreciation of good drama is becoming more common. Shakespeare's plays have enjoyed a modern revival. Ibsen has had a vogue that no "popular" playwright has ever known. George Bernard Shaw has out-Shawed his rivals. You need not put on an Ibsen play. His plays, with the possible exception of a condensed version of *Peer Gynt* or *The Warriors of Helgeland* are far too mature for the high-school student. Nor are most of Shaw's plays good material for the amateur. Shaw requires too much finish of technique for the delivery of his telling lines. Yet good amateur performances of *Arms and the Man*, *Androcles and the Lion* have been given; *You Never Can Tell* may be presented by amateurs although it requires considerable social sophistication. Nor is all of Shakespeare an Open Sesame for the high-school student. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by all means, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Comedy of Errors*, and *As You Like It*, perhaps, and *Twelfth Night*. Amateurs have been known to do *Romeo and Juliet* not badly, and the first part of *Henry IV* and *The Tempest*. But there are other plays whose lines are worth memorizing, whose characters are worth interpreting and whose settings are a spur to the imagination.

Don't be too sure that a modern comedy, no matter how good, is what you want. Any actor will tell you that comedy is the hardest of all forms of drama. It is intellectual rather than emotional. It requires the ability to get a clever line across cleverly, and the power of suggesting



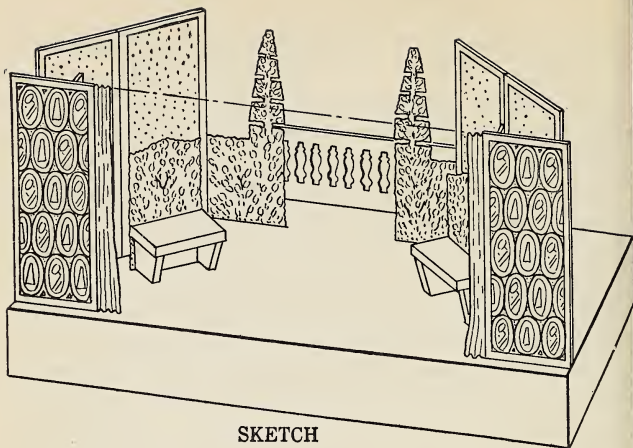
character and action in an apparently off-hand manner, a very difficult thing to do. Then there is seldom anything of setting or costuming to help the imagination. The imagination of the audience is unstirred by a "dress-suit," especially if it is awkwardly worn.

As a rule, audiences come to high-school plays, not to see the play, but to see the players. They want to see Tom and Geraldine act. Now if Tom and Geraldine are representing characters very like themselves, in clothes very like their own, it is hard for their friends to separate these play-characters from Tom and Geraldine. Particularly, as sometimes happens, if the young actors are not very skilful! In other words, there is no illusion. But if Tom and Geraldine are portraying characters whose unlikeness to their ordinary selves releases them from awkwardness, in costuming and setting which aids the illusion, then Tom and Geraldine are a thousand times more likely to do themselves and the author justice.

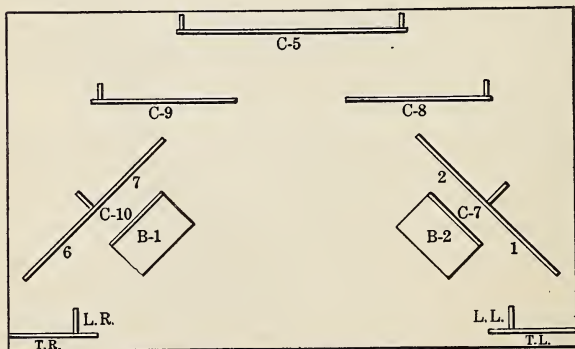
Also a modern comedy is likely to put the amateur in danger of unflattering comparison with professionals who have recently played it.

Difficulties of production should not discourage you from putting on a good play, unless you are sure those difficulties are insurmountable. Be content with a simple setting, one which says frankly to the audience, "We are not trying to do anything we can't do." The audience will like it better than an elaborate setting badly done; just as people of taste prefer a ringless hand to one decked with ten-cent "diamonds." Very likely the simple set is better anyway. It was Gordon Craig who first used screens as settings, and some of the most successful productions of The Theatre Guild (New York) have used screens. Make your own





SKETCH



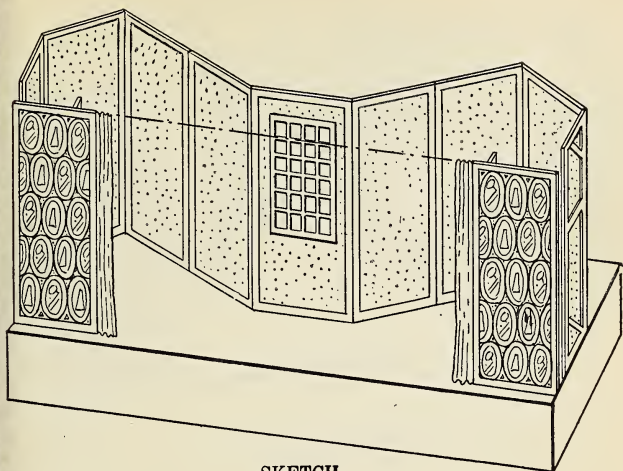
PLAN

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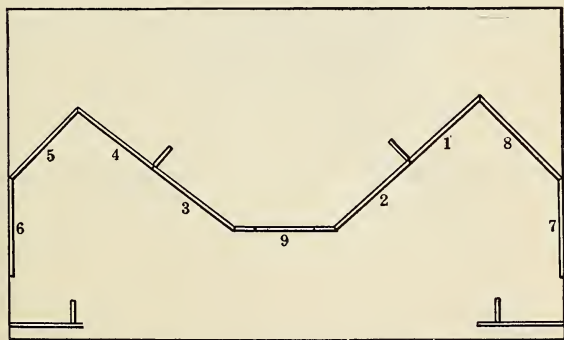
PLANS AND SKETCHES OF SETS

These illustrate how effectively screens may be used





SKETCH

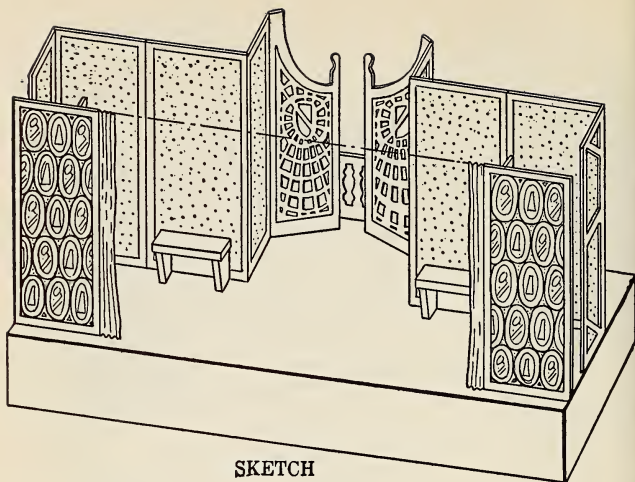


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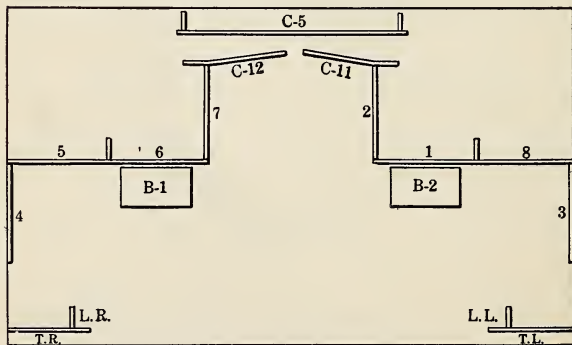
USED IN SHAKESPEARE'S "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Drawn by Ralph Smalley of the Mechanic Arts High School, St. Paul





SKETCH



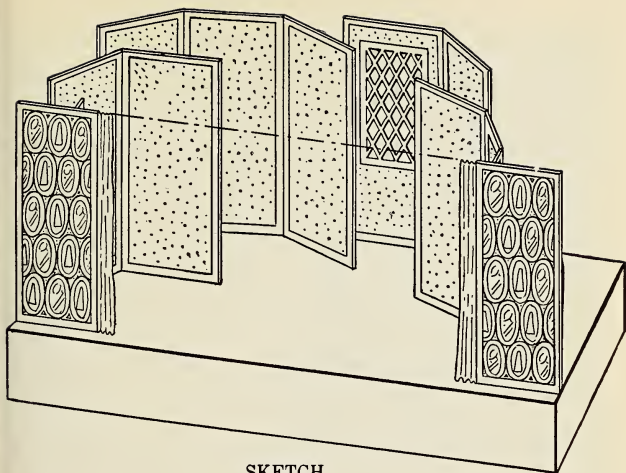
PLAN

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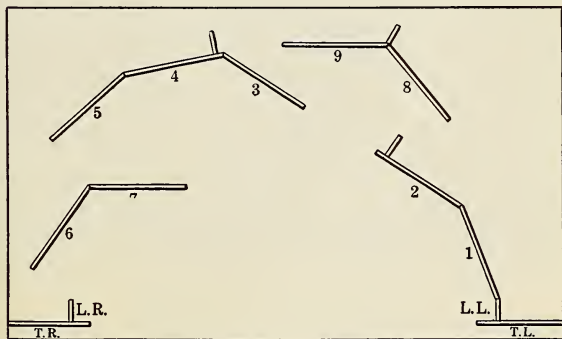
PLANS AND SKETCHES OF SETS

These illustrate how effectively screens may be used





SKETCH



PLAN

Scale:  $\frac{1}{4} = 1'-0"$

USED IN SHAKESPEARE'S "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Drawn by Ralph Smalley of the Mechanic Arts High School, St. Paul



screens, covering them with plain fabric, or with heavy paper.

Or use a plain cyclorama. Unbleached cotton of heavy quality hangs well, and takes the light beautifully. One of the greatest assets to the amateur is a plain blue back-drop. Avoid those painted with woods, hills, dales, and gardens as you would avoid a steam calliope in the orchestra. If you use canvas flats for a "box" interior, paint them in a plain neutral color. Framework covered with heavy wrapping paper which can be painted may be used on very small stages.

If possible, make a permanent set which, in connection with a cyclorama and a plain drop, may be used for many plays. Such a set was used and most skilfully manipulated by Sam Hume in the Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit. It consisted of four pylons or columns, an archway, a stairway, a window, two screens, two flats, two tree forms, two platforms. These were used in different combinations, and the cost of each set after the permanent pieces had once been acquired was about fifteen dollars. Read Sheldon Cheney's account of this in his chapter on setting in *The Art Theatre*.

You will find that the *Drama Magazine*, the *Theatre Arts Monthly* and the *Theatre Magazine* devote space each month to pictures of amateur sets.

Experiment with the Shakespearean stage. It has many advantages for Shakespearean plays.

Do not forget the importance of lighting. If your stage is equipped only with borders and footlights, much can be accomplished with these, if the bulbs are red, white, and blue. Dimmers are of course necessary if your sunsets and sunrises are not to occur with volcanic effect.





*Courtesy of "Theatre Magazine"*

SCENE FROM "ROMEO AND JULIET"

Presented by students of South High School, Minneapolis, Minnesota.  
Scenery made of wall-board, by students



Make your own costumes when possible. The whole costume-plot should be in charge of one person: design, color-scheme, purchasing of fabrics, and cutting. Otherwise you will have no unity of production. The costume committee should work with director and scenery designer; for grouping, background, lighting, and the spirit of the play must be in harmony. If you must use cambric (never do it unless the business manager insists) remove the "shine" by dipping it. Reception silk, outing-flannels, and sateen are great assets for the thrifty costumer. Voile and tarletan hang better than cheesecloth, though cheesecloth dyes well. Dyeing is all-important. It is a good and cheerful thing to remember when making stage costumes that they need not be made too well. The effect is the thing. Rough edges and unhemmed hems are often better than the stiffness of too much finishing. Read again the costume principles in Chapter Eleven.

And we come to the last word! When you give a play, go into it seriously. Do it as well as it is possible for you to do it. Do not deceive yourselves; you are giving this play for what *you* can get out of it, not what you can give an audience. They have probably seen the same thing better enacted elsewhere. But you get nothing out of it, not even fun, unless you are working intelligently and hard, coöperating with the director and your fellow players, forgetful of yourself, thinking only of the play. You can at least send your audience away saying, "It was a beautiful play, and, whatever its faults, it was done in the right spirit." Or would you prefer that they should gush, "You looked just too sweet, dear, in that pink thing!"

As Mrs. Pampinelli said when the hero's moustache came off. "I don't think the audience noticed it."



And this is the word before the curtain rises — Keep a high standard. Your performance will fall far short of a professional performance. But it may have its own excellencies. It may have a freshness and charm lacking in the commercial theatre. It may have a setting beautiful in its simplicity and imaginative quality. It may have a background of understanding and a spirit of seeking “after the expression that makes life luminous and rich.” It may give the people of your community an opportunity of seeing a play which they would not see in the commercial theatre.

And so, ring up the curtain!

#### QUESTIONS AND PROJECTS

1. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of the modern comedy as a medium for amateurs. What are the difficulties of farce?
2. Write a theme on High School Audiences I Have Known. Write a theme on Play-Production in our High School.
3. Make a report on Community Theatres.
4. Make a report on Ten Modern Dramatists, with Ibsen as your first name. Since this is not a class in dramatic criticism, this report need be little more than an outline: dates, country, importance to drama, list of plays, and characteristics as a playwright. See chapter on bibliography for references.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### PLAYWRITING

QUINCE. I hope here is a play fitted.

— *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

This chapter you may skip, if your instructor agrees. But some of you will want to read it; for in every group there is someone interested in playwriting. In these days, indeed, almost everyone has a play up his sleeve. If you should try your hand at writing a play, and it is a process very enlightening to the author, though often trying to the audience, you might observe certain elementary principles.

Again remember that there is no set of rules which, like a patent plant-food, will grow a play. Life, and life only, will grow one. "It is a better preparation for the career of a dramatist," Lewisohn says in *The Creative Life*, "to have watched the actions of a few villagers and to have brooded over those actions at that spiritual core where criticism and creation are one, than to have read all the manuals of playwriting and stagecraft in the world, and be an expert on lighting and decoration."

These are the principles.

(1) Confine yourself at first to a one-act play, otherwise you are likely to run to fourteen scenes and an epilogue.

(2) Write out of your own experience, taking your situations from life, and your setting from your own environment. Do not try to write on situations with which you are actually unfamiliar, or to deal with emotions which are impossible for you to interpret. If you live in Iowa, lay



your scene there rather than in Paris. There is just as much drama in the town you live in as there is in Paris. The action will be different, but emotions are pretty much the same everywhere. If you are unfamiliar with butlers and balls, don't feature butlers and balls in your play. If you never saw an ocean-liner or a threshing machine, don't lay the scene of your play on an ocean-liner or a western farm. Look about you and take the stuff of your play from what you see and know. Avoid, however, the school-girly "Cupid at Boarding School" sort of thing. There is plenty of real humor and real tragedy in the life around you. You need be neither trivial nor pretentious.

(3) If you make your play purely imaginative you have a tremendous advantage. For no one can say what conditions are in fairyland or the kingdom of dreams.

(4) Remember, that in a play every point has to be built up or established in the mind of your audience. For example, in Galsworthy's *Loyalties* it is established that Captain Dancy is a good jumper. Early in the first act we hear that Dancy had won a wager that he could make a standing jump on to a bookcase four feet high. Later in the act, money is stolen by a thief who must have taken a long jump to get it. In the last act when Dancy is proved the thief, we would have been skeptical of his guilt had not the point of the jumping been made first.

You have seen in *A Night at an Inn* how carefully the persistence of the priests is established by the episode of Albert in the streets of Hull. The remark about "what they did in Malta to poor old Jim," which might seem to have nothing to do with the play, is used to establish further the implacable character of the Hindus and to prepare us for the catastrophe.



(5) Build up your characters carefully. Again, in *A Night at an Inn* notice how the character of the Toff is given by the others before he himself has a line. "What's his idea, I wonder?" "How much longer will he keep us here." "You never know with him." "'E's such a toff." "'E's clever and no mistake."

Be sure that you have given your characters sufficient motives for what they do — that is, see that they are well motivated. John, in *The Weather Breeder*, is motivated by his desire to say "I told you so." The characters in *The Proposal* are motivated by their sense of property. These are motives of character. In *My Lady's Rose* you have motivation by incident as well as character; this is supplied by Liza's wedding. In *The Twilight Saint* you have emotional motivation — love and ambition at war with each other.

Visualize your characters. Before you write any dialog, hand in to your instructor a character sketch of each person in your play as you have visualized him — both as to his appearance and his qualities. Then see how well you can characterize in dialog. This is much more difficult. You cannot make a character describe himself, nor can he always be characterized by others. In real life, our knowledge of the character of our friends is gained largely from little things, and from what they do as well as from what they say. In *A Night at an Inn*, no one says that Sniggers is the weakest of the crooks; but it is Sniggers who does most of the complaining; it is Sniggers who demands the ruby, and is the first to give it back; it is Sniggers who is reduced to maudlin tears by what he has seen in the garden.

How much we learn of Pia in *The Twilight Saint* when we hear her interrupting Guido's passionate outpourings



by "Thy corner is too hot!" or "If I should stew in milk the peas, do you think the child would eat it?" Or by her comment on Saint Francis, "They are too thin, these brothers."

(6) Plan your scenes with reference to your one most important scene, the climax. Scenes here do not mean divisions of an act, as Scene i or Scene ii. What happens between the entrance and exit of a character is called a scene. For example, there is a scene between Bill and the Toff after the others have gone out, and when they return we have another scene. Notice how *A Night at an Inn* is planned with reference to its climax, the entrance of the Idol. Observe how it is also prepared for by references to the supernatural, by the value of the ruby, by the pursuit of the priests, by the three entrances of the priests, by an atmosphere of mystery, by a steady deepening of interest and emotion, and at last by Sniggers' dramatic return from the garden, full of that horror which he has seen but cannot describe.

Note how a little suspense is always left over from each scene; no scene is complete in itself. When the men have gone out with the ruby, we know that something more is to happen. When they return, we have the priests to dispose of. When they are gone, there is still the ruby. Then the author gives us an uneasy feeling that their troubles are not over, they are too cocksure. Thus we have a constant feeling of suspense.

(7) Remember that action and emotion are the essentials of drama. Select a situation that has both these qualities. Remember also that you are not writing a story. Do not tell us *about* things, make us *see* them and *feel* them. Lord Dunsany does not tell us that the inn was a mysterious



place. He makes Sniggers say that it was a nasty place, and makes us *feel* that it was uncanny. He does not tell us that Sniggers was disturbed by what he saw in the garden, but he *shows* us Sniggers in a state of blubbering terror.

But as I have said before, do not attempt to portray emotions or situations which are removed utterly from your own experience, or those which only the greatest dramatists can depict.

(8) Before writing your dialog, hand in a scenario of your play. A scenario means a complete development of the play without dialog.

A scenario for *A Night at an Inn* would be something like this:

A. E. Fortesque, called the Toff, a dilapidated gentleman who has allied himself with crooks and low-class adventurers, sits reading a newspaper in a room in a lonely inn eighty miles from London. At a table two sailors, Sniggers and Bill, are talking in low tones. Albert, another sailor, sits a little apart. There is a window at the back, and doors R. and L.

Sniggers and Bill are discussing the loneliness of the place, which is getting on their nerves. They ask the Toff how long he has rented it for. The Toff pays no attention. They decide that clever ones like the Toff sometimes make a mess of things. They disclose the fact that they are all hiding there because they have stolen the ruby eye from an idol in India, and three priests of the idol have been following them.

Albert brags foolishly that he "give the black devils the slip" by turning corners in the town of Hull, so that they will see no more of the priests.

The Toff is not impressed by Albert's cleverness.

The three ask the Toff for the ruby. He gives it to them without question. They go out.

The Toff puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on reading.



The three come rushing back, frightened. They have seen the three black priests. They decide to be guided by the Toff.

The Toff tells them to put away revolvers and draw knives.

The Toff shows them how to counterfeit going out by going past the window, opening the door R. inward, slipping down on his knees, closing the door, and remaining on the inside.

When all three have made their sham exit, the Toff puts the ruby beside him on the table, lights a cigarette, and reads the paper.

The door opens and an Indian priest wriggles along the floor. He moves toward the Toff. The three men are concealed by an armchair. When the priest nears the Toff, he is stabbed by Bill.

In order to vary the plan the Toff pretends to fall dead in view of the window, and falls near the dead priest.

Another priest creeps in and is stabbed by Bill.

The Toff orders Albert to pretend to enter the room. The Toff and Bill pick up the bodies of the dead priests, wave their arms about in front of the window, and stage a sham fight with Albert, who falls, apparently dead.

The third priest enters cautiously, puts his back to the wall, and is knifed by the Toff.

The men praise the Toff for his cleverness. He assures them there is no more danger. They decide to have a celebration, leaving the priests on the floor till evening.

They get bottles from the cupboard. The Toff asks for water. Sniggers goes into the garden to get it.

As Bill and Albert are drinking healths, Sniggers reënters in abject terror, and offers to give back his share in the ruby.

While Sniggers, in tears, is acknowledging that he has seen something horrible and unexplainable, steps are heard.

Enter a hideous, blind idol. It gropes its way to the ruby, screws it into place, and exits.

While the men are still terror-stricken, a voice off, with an outlandish accent, calls Bill's name.

Bill makes his exit like one in a horrid trance, compelled by a supernatural power. A moan is heard outside.

Sniggers goes to the window and falls back weakly.

Albert is called. Same business.

Sniggers is called and goes.



The Toff is called and goes out saying that he did not foresee this. The curtain falls.

(9) Try to make your dialog both natural and interesting. Do not try to be too clever on the one hand, nor too flat and flavorless on the other. Study how people really talk; by what humorous ways they reveal human nature in general and their own nature in particular. But remember that dramatic dialog cannot be as aimless and pointless as ordinary conversation. Dramatic dialog must develop plot and character. It must get somewhere. It cannot wander around in circles.

Try some dialog exercises. Write a purely naturalistic bit of dialog, such as might occur at the telephone, on the street car, in a shop. Then take the same dialog, and write it around a situation. For example, dialog number one might be a conversation between a saleswoman and a customer; the sort that goes on in shops. Dialog number two might develop the situation that the customer is suspected of shoplifting; or that the customer's son has been interested in the saleswoman; and the customer, who is not known to the girl, has made an errand to this shop for the particular purpose of finding out what the girl is like. Characterize both girl and customer in your dialog, and give us the outlines of the situation.

Write dialogs that develop a definite situation at a definite moment. For example; a man has a very extravagant family; he shams bankruptcy. Write the dialog at the moment of the announcement that he is bankrupt. Be sure to characterize each member of the family.

(10) Read plays and then more plays. But remember how interesting is life!



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### GENERAL SUMMARY

MACDUFF. Did you say all? — *Macbeth*.

You began this course with the notion that you might learn certain definite things. These were: some of the principles by which plays are made and by which they may be judged — this was the study of drama; and something of amateur acting — this was dramatics. From the former you hoped to be able to read a play or see one more intelligently; hence with greater pleasure, since you are of those who like to use their brains. From the latter you hoped to gain poise, some voice training, improved coöperation with your fellows, a greater knowledge of human nature, and a new sense of the dramatic value of life that should increase your enjoyment of living.

It is for you to say whether you have learned these things. Perhaps you can judge better if we rehearse the scene again.

You remember the difficulty about the definition of a play, and how you finally adopted the makeshift, a play is a story capable of being acted. An actable story must contain the essentials of drama: action and emotion. It will also have conflict — actual, mental, or emotional — and probably both surprise and suspense. You classified drama as farce and melodrama, both of which depend on situation, in one absurd, in the other sensational; and as comedy and tragedy, which depend on character. The one views human nature humorously, laughing at its weaknesses, even while



admitting their folly; the other shows life in its most serious aspects as a struggle ending in defeat.

You classified drama still further, remembering always that classifications are never infallible, into naturalistic, romantic, and symbolistic drama. The symbolistic employed symbols or ideas instead of people; the naturalistic attempted to photograph life as the playwright saw it; the romantic idealized or showed only the "high spots."

A play, you saw, had plot, characters, and dialog. It might also have a theme — an idea which the author is trying to get across to his audience — sometimes subordinate to the story, sometimes developing into a problem play or propaganda play. You saw that plot is divided into an introduction or exposition, which tells what has occurred before the rise of the curtain; an inciting crisis, which gives spur to the action; the development of the plot; the climax or the supreme clash of the opposing forces; the *dénouement* or unravelling; and the catastrophe or end.

You discussed character, discarding stage types and looking for truth to life — reality in its deepest sense — and vividness. Dialog, you decided, must also have truth to life, because dialog must conform to the dramatic necessity of advancing plot, developing character, or lending atmosphere.

Acting was the next point. Acting which, like any art, requires a definite technique; acting which is so emphatically creation, not imitation. Pantomime, the earliest and perhaps still the most trustworthy method of conveying ideas, you saw as the fundamental of acting. By means of pantomime emotions, ideas, character impressions are conveyed. All these you endeavored to make clear in



pantomimes, beginning with the simple idea and action pantomimes; proceeding through a study of emotions and transitions to character and life-study pantomimes, group work, and finally, voice and body acting together, to character monologs. In all this you found that you must work from the inside out. *The idea, the feeling had to precede the action.* Sincerity was the keynote of acting.

When you began to use the voice as well as the body as a medium of expression, you still found the mental and emotional held the most important place. The study of the breathing apparatus and the breathing process, the proper use of the diaphragm, correct posture, exercises for gaining support and control, for relaxation and freedom, exercises for resonance, were still but mechanical means to mental end. You found that when your sense of word value was right, when you had definite mental pictures, when you could put yourself into the mood of a line and visualize the character who spoke it, that lines would phrase themselves, transitions from one feeling to another occurred naturally, voice took the right pitch and tone-color, action was suited to word and word to action, variety replaced monotony, and the whole became a unit. *Impression had preceded expression.*

In this way you saw that many voice defects are mental and emotional rather than physical. Hence the way to remedy them is to increase one's mental and emotional capacity.

The importance of good diction was next noted. Your attention was called to many common faults of vowel and consonant sounds, syllabification, pronunciation, and accent, which can be corrected only by practice and care.

You then went to a play and saw it critically, perhaps



for the first time. You considered first the play itself, its story, its theme, structure, the author's attitude toward life. You were not dismayed if the play refused to be put into any narrow classification; but looked only to see if its comedy and tragedy were rooted in human nature, its farce and melodrama sincerely or cheaply sensational. You asked whether the characters were true (not photographic), well motivated, and if the dialog was true to the characters, lively and dramatic.

In the actor you looked for real creation of character, for sincerity rather than "hokum," for a voice which adequately expressed the character, for an intelligent reading of the lines. Above all you demanded *projection* of character. You wished the play as a whole to be pitched in the right key, to be played at the right tempo, to have rhythm and unity. Mentally you leaped upon the stage and examined with interest the exits and entrances, and finally the setting.

At once you noted the change that had taken place in stagecraft. Modern stagecraft was following the lead of Adolphe Appia, Gordon Craig, and Max Reinhardt with their principles of simplicity, suggestiveness, harmony, and expressiveness. Scenery was no longer attempting to reproduce, but was aiming to suggest and to express the idea of a play. Simplification had gone so far in some instances as to make use of a background consisting of a cyclorama or even of screens. Three arches or a single arch sometimes formed permanent backgrounds and were used in various combinations. Such sets depended largely on lighting for their effect. You saw with amazement what effects the manipulation of a modern switchboard could produce.



Costumes, too, had become part of the play. They, too, expressed the idea of the play in color and design; and were appropriate to background, grouping, and characters.

All this examination of principles you found did not destroy your pleasure in seeing a play, but rather increased it. You were still able to get the *illusion* — the sense that what was taking place upon the stage was real for the moment. You yourself, as you found later, were able to give that illusion if, by putting yourself into the spirit of the play as a child would do, you allowed the character and feeling to take possession of your unconscious mind, without losing either your sense of technique or your sense of audience.

Then, as audience you found yourself not without responsibility. First, you were to go to a play with something besides your ticket; namely, a receptive and intelligent mind, and a spirit disposed to be sympathetic. Second, you were to encourage the better type of dramatic production.

As a member of a dramatic organization you were bound to select a play worth producing; and to set and costume the play as simply as possible, but as beautifully as circumstances would permit. As a member of a cast you would endeavor to present something that should be amateurish only in the inevitable limitations of your knowledge and equipment; but in effort and spirit, truly creative.

“We bow.”



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### OF BIBLIOGRAPHY: FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT

“Of making many books there is no end.” — *Ecclesiastes*.

The ideas in the preceding chapters are more the result of experiment than of reading. So if you wish to supplement these meagre thoughts with outside material, you will come upon a bewildering mass of references. Perhaps this chapter may serve to classify some of this material.

The question oftenest asked of librarians is, “How can I find a play for my class, club, or group?” It is a difficult question to answer. For a satisfactory reply should really be founded on an acquaintance with the group in question and with the circumstances under which they work. The best that can be done here is to discuss some of the *sources of information*.

*Public libraries*, of course, are always ready to help. Those in the larger cities publish lists of actable one-act plays. If your own library does not furnish such a list, it can procure one. An example of an excellent list is that recently issued by the library of Toronto, Canada, called *Presentable Plays*.

You will find also in the public library a *Dramatic Index* of many volumes, published by the F. W. Faxon Company of Boston; and two enormous volumes of *Dramatic Compositions Copyrighted in the United States*, issued by the government printing office at Washington. There are less unwieldy sources in a valuable *Index to Plays*, compiled by Ina Ten Eyck Firkins and published by the H. W. Wilson



Company of New York; and a similar *Index to One-Act Plays*, compiled by Hannah Logasa and Winifred Ver Moody, published by F. W. Faxon of Boston. A list of *One Hundred One-Act Plays*, compiled by A. M. Drummond, is published by the Banta Company of Menasha, Wisconsin. Norman Lee Swartout of Summit, New Jersey, gets out a list of *303 Good Plays*. A *Guide to Longer Plays* by Frank S. Shay, Appleton, New York, is of great value to little theatres, and gives many plays suitable for high schools. Mr. Shay has also compiled a list of *One Thousand and One Plays* for the Little Theatre, which the Stewart Kidd Company of Cincinnati publishes.

Many universities publish bulletins of plays. A valuable list is to be found in the *Colorado State Teachers' Bulletin*, Series 26, Number 3, published by the University of Colorado. The *Extension Bulletin of the New York State College of Agriculture*, published by Cornell University, is excellent; so is the *Bulletin of the University of Florida*. Cornell also issues a *List of Plays for the Country Theatre*, edited by A. M. Drummond. A *Catalog and Review of Plays for Amateurs*, edited by Cecilia M. Young, is issued by the Loyola University Press of Chicago.

The *Drama League* of America publishes a *List of One-Act Plays for High Schools*, compiled by Clarence Stratton. The Drama League is also the publisher of other lists of carefully selected plays, and of *The Little Theatre Review* which reviews current plays. Information about plays can always be obtained at their Chicago office, 59 East Van Buren Street. From this office comes also an excellent list of *Recent One-Act Plays for Schools*.

Of course, there are the *catalogs of dramatic publishing houses and play-leasing companies*, but since these list



everything published by the house, they are likely to be confusing. By far the best of these catalogs is that of the Samuel W. French Company at 25 West 45th Street, New York. This company also issues a monthly bulletin of newly published plays. The Century Company of New York has a good list of community drama.

Many of us put on a play for the same reason that we go to see one: someone has told us that it is a good play. Herein follows *a list of long plays* which the writer recommends for high schools.

Pre-Shakespearean:

*Everyman*; *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (attributed to John Still, arranged by Colin Campbell Clements).

Shakespeare:

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Taming of the Shrew* (in Elizabethan and in modern dress); *Romeo and Juliet*; *Twelfth Night*; *The Tempest*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *A Comedy of Errors*. *As You Like It*, which is so often given, is much more difficult for amateurs than the others.

Beaumont and Fletcher:

*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

Classic comedies:

*The Imaginary Invalid*; *The Miser* (Molière); *She Stoops to Conquer* (Goldsmith); *The Rivals* (Sheridan).

Ibsen:

*Peer Gynt* (make your own cutting, or use the Mansfield acting version, published by the Walter Baker Company of Boston); *The Pretenders*; *The Warriors of Helgeland*.

Poetic and symbolistic dramas:

*Bethlehem* (Housman); *The Bluebird*; *The Betrothal* (Maeterlinck); *The Gods of the Mountain*; *If* (Lord Dunsany); *The Ivory Door* (Milne); *The Journey of the Lucky Pehr* (Strindberg); *Peter Pan* (Barrie); *The Piper* (Peabody); *Prunella* (Housman); *The Scarecrow* (MacKaye); *The Sea-Woman's Cloak* (Rives); *Sherwood* (Noyes); *The Yellow Jacket* (Hazelton and Benrimo).



## Fantastic comedies:

*Beggar on Horseback* (Kaufman and Connelly); *The Devil in the Cheese* (Cushing); *A Kiss for Cinderella* (Barrie); *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* (Anatole France); *The Poor Little Rich Girl* (Eleanor Gates); *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, dramatic version by Alice Gerstenberg); *The Wizard of Oz* (story by Baum, dramatic version by Goodspeed).

## Modern comedies:

*The Admirable Crichton* (Barrie); *The Poor Nut* (Nugent); *The Potters* (McEvoy); *The Show-Off, The Torchbearers*, (Kelly); *A Successful Calamity* (Clare Kummer); *Arms and the Man, You Never Can Tell* (Shaw).

## Costume comedies by modern writers:

*Beau Brummell* (Clyde Fitch); *If I Were King* (McCarthy); *Milestones* (Bennett); *Monsieur Beaucaire* (Tarkington); *Little Old New York* (Young); *The Devil's Disciple* (Shaw); *Pomander Walk* (Parker); *Rip Van Winkle* (Joseph Jefferson acting version in *Representative American Plays* edited by Quinn); *The Roman-cers* (Rostand); *Rose of Plymouth Town* (Sutherland).

## Plays of American history:

*Abraham Lincoln* (Drinkwater); *The Arrow-Maker* (Austin); *Washington, the Man Who Made Us* (Percy MacKaye).

## Melodrama:

*Captain Applejack* (Hackett); *Seven Keys to Baldpate* (Cohan); *The Thirteenth Chair* (Veiller); *Treasure Island* (Stevenson, acting version by Jules Eckert Goodman).

## Three plays by Spanish authors:

*Cradle Song* (Sierra); *The Women Have Their Way, The Lady from Alfaceque* (Quinteros).

Modern comedies, mostly of long standing, perennially popular with the amateur: (More the sort of thing everybody does!)

*Adam and Eva* (Bolton and Middleton); *The Charm School, Come Out of the Kitchen* (Miller); *The Goose Hangs High* (Beach); *Green Stockings* (Mason); *Grumpy* (Hodges and Percyval); *The Gypsy Trail* (Housum); *Merton of the Movies* (Kaufman and Connelly); *Old Man Minick* (Ferber); *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* (Jerome); *Peg o' My Heart* (Manners); *The Patsy*



(Connors); *Rollo's Wild Oat* (Kummer); *Seventeen* (Tarkington); *Strongheart* (DeMille); *A Tailor-Made Man* (Smith); *Three Wise Fools* (Strong); *To the Ladies* (Kaufman and Connelly).

Three plays of Eugene O'Neill (not released at present):

*The Emperor Jones*, *The Fountain*, *Marco Millions*.

Three plays of race:

*The Dybbuk* (Rappoport); *The Melting Pot* (Zangwill); *In Abraham's Bosom* (Green).

An interesting problem in setting and characterization:

*My Lady's Dress* (Knoblock).

The plays on the above list are either published by the Samuel W. French Company of New York, or can be procured through them. If some of them sound ambitious for high-school students, remember that a high-school play is neither a money-making scheme nor a "show"; it is an educational project. And that the play which is without merit in itself is not only a waste of time and money, but requires a great degree of technique in order to "get across" at all.

Some of the *collections of longer plays* are:

*The Atlantic Book of Modern Plays*. The Atlantic Press, New York.  
*Chief Contemporary Dramatists*, Thomas Dickinson. Little, Brown, Boston.

*Contemporary Plays*, also by Dickinson. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.  
*Dramas by Present-Day Writers*, R. W. Spence, editor. Scribners, New York.

*Longer Plays by Modern Authors*, Helen Cohen. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*Modern American Plays*, G. P. Baker. Harcourt, Brace, New York.  
*Modern Plays Short and Long*, Frederick Law. Century Company, New York.

*Representative American Dramas and Representative British Dramas*, M. J. Montrose. Little, Brown, Boston.

*Representative American Plays*, Quinn. Century Company, New York.



A great many of these plays are unsuited for high-school presentation; but many are suitable for study, and several can be produced by high schools.

The best way to familiarize oneself with *current plays* is to read play reviews and play comment in newspapers and such publications as *The Theatre*, *The Drama*, and *The Little Theatre Review*. Ten of the most successful New York plays are published yearly by Burns Mantle in his book of *The Best Plays* (Small, Maynard, Boston). Few of these are suitable for high schools.

Addresses of all publishing companies may be found in the United States Catalog in any public or school library.

At this point it may be well to say a word about royalties. Any organization that tries to produce a play on which there is a royalty, without payment of the amount stipulated by the publisher of the play, is not only running the risk of fine or imprisonment; but is committing a dishonorable act. Such an attempt to evade responsibility is not clever; it is merely criminal, and deserves the punishment prescribed by law. An author's work is his property, and an infringement upon his property rights must be plainly labelled stealing.

One-act plays are more useful for amateur purposes than longer plays, a fact not generally recognized by directors. An evening of one-act plays has variety, offers interesting problems in setting, and gives opportunity to many players of varying types. Most one-act plays worth producing can be found in play collections. Here you have a fairly comprehensive list:

*The Appleton Book of Short Plays*, compiled by Kenyon Nicholson. Appleton, New York.

*The Appleton Little Theatre Plays*, compiled by Grace Adams. Appleton, New York.



*American Contemporary One-Act Plays*, Frank Shay. Stewart Kidd, Cincinnati.

*The Atlantic Book of Junior Plays*. Atlantic Press, New York.

*Contemporary One-Act Plays*, B. R. Lewis. Scribners, New York.

*Echoes of the War*, Sir James Barrie. Scribners, New York.

*Eight One-Act Plays*, George Calderon. Grant Richard, Ltd., London.

*Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays*, Shay and Loving. Stewart Kidd, Cincinnati.

*Five One-Act Plays*, Stanley Houghton. French, New York.

*Five Plays*, Lord Dunsany. Little, Brown, Boston.

*The Flattering Word and Other Plays*, George Kelly. Little, Brown, Boston.

*Four One-Act Plays*, Gertrude Jennings. French, New York.

*Form-Room Plays* (Senior Book), Evelyn Smith. Dutton, New York.

*47-Workshop Plays*. Brentano, New York.

*Half Hours*, Sir James Barrie. Scribners, New York.

*Harvard Dramatic Club Plays*. Brentano, New York.

*The Junior Play Book*, Helen Cohen. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*Ladies' Home Journal One-Act Plays*. Doubleday, Garden City, N. Y.

*Little Plays from Shakespeare*, Evelyn Smith. Nelson and Sons, New York.

*Moon of the Caribbees and Six Other Plays of the Sea*, Eugene O'Neill. Boni and Liveright, New York.

*More Contemporary One-Act Plays*, Frank Shay. Appleton, New York.

*More One-Act Plays*, Helen Cohen. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*Old Testament Drama*, M. W. Thomas. Nelson and Sons, New York.

*One-Act Plays*, Christopher Morley. Doubleday, Garden City, New York.

*One-Act Plays by Modern Authors*, Helen Cohen. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*One-Act Plays for Secondary Schools*, Webber and Webster. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

*One-Act Plays for Stage and Study*. French, New York.

*One-Act Plays of To-day*, J. W. Marriott. Small, Maynard, Boston.



- Open Air Plays*, Harold Brighthouse. French, New York.
- Plays for Classroom Interpretation*, Knickerbocker. Holt, New York.
- Plays for Our American Holidays*, Schaffler and Sanford. Dodd, Mead, New York.
- Plays from Literature* (Senior Book), Evelyn Smith. Nelson and Sons, New York.
- Plays for Strolling Mimmers*, Frank Shay. Appleton, New York.
- Plays of Gods and Men*, Lord Dunsany. Luce, Boston.
- Plays of Near and Far*, Lord Dunsany. Putnam, New York.
- Portmanteau Plays*, Stewart Walker. Stewart Kidd, Cincinnati.
- Portmanteau Adaptations*, Stewart Walker. Stewart Kidd, Cincinnati.
- Puppet Plays*, Alfred Kreymborg. Harcourt, Brace, New York.
- Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors*, Margaret Mayorga. Little, Brown, Boston.
- Set the Stage for Eight*, Doris Halman. Little, Brown, Boston.
- Seven Short Plays*, Lady Gregory. Putnam, New York.
- Short Plays for Junior and Senior High Schools*, Webber and Webster. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Short Plays by Representative Authors*, Alice Smith. Macmillan, New York.
- A Treasury of Plays for Children*, M. J. Montrose. Little, Brown, Boston.
- A Treasury of Plays for Men*, Frank Shay. Little, Brown, Boston.
- A Treasury of Plays for Women*, Frank Shay. Little, Brown, Boston.
- Twenty-five International Short Plays*, Frank Shay. Appleton, New York.
- Types of Modern Dramatic Composition*, Phillips and Johnson. Ginn and Co., Boston.
- Wisconsin Plays*, Thomas Dickinson. B. W. Huebsch, New York.
- The Wonder Hat and Other One-Act Plays*, Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht. Appleton, New York.

The art of *production* is treated in:

- Essays on the Arts of the Theatre*, edited by Edith J. R. Isaacs. Theatre Arts, New York.
- On the Art of the Theatre*, Gordon Craig. Browne's Bookstore, Chicago.



*The Theatre Advancing*, Gordon Craig. Little, Brown, Boston.

*The Theatre of To-day*, Kenneth MacGowan. Boni and Liveright, New York.

*The Theatre of To-morrow*, Kenneth MacGowan. Boni and Liveright, New York.

*Production* is treated more practically in:

*The Art Theatre*, Sheldon Cheney. Knopf, New York.

*The Community Playhouse*, C. DeGoverian. Huebsch, New York.

*Modern Theatres*, Irving Pichel. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*On Building a Theatre*, Irving Pichel. Theatre Arts, New York.

(This gives stage equipment and construction for small theatres, schools, and community buildings.)

*The Practical Theatre*, Frank Shay. Appleton, New York.

*Stage Decoration*, Sheldon Cheney. John Day, New York.

See also *Drawings for the Theatre*, Robert Edmond Jones. Theatre Arts, New York.

*Theatre Arts Prints* (Drawings for the Theatre), John Day, New York.

Still more practical for high school students are:

*Acting and Play Production*, Andrews and Wierick. Longmans, Green, New York.

*The Art of Play Production*, John Dolman, Jr. Harper, New York.

*How to Produce Amateur Plays*, Barrett Clark. Little, Brown, Boston.

*Producing in Little Theatres*, Clarence Stratton. Holt, New York.

*Play Production for Little Theatres, Schools and Colleges*, Milton Smith. Appleton, New York.

*The School Theatre*, Roy Mitchell. Brentano, New York.

*Direction* is emphasized in:

*Practical Stage Directing for Amateurs*, Emerson Taylor. Dutton, New York.

Recent practical books on *lighting* are:

*A Glossary of Stage Lighting*, Stanley R. McCandless. Theatre Arts, New York.

*Stage Lighting*, Theodore Fuchs. Little, Brown, Boston.

*Stage Lighting*, C. H. Ridge. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.



For authentic *Historical costuming* you may consult the Frederic Hottenroth costume plates of *Men's and Women's Costumes*, or *Costumes of the World* by de Giafferi, or the *History of Costume* by Weythe, or the *Cyclopedia of Costume*. These are ponderous volumes which must be consulted in a reference library. More accessible books which deal with imaginative as well as historical costumes, and which contain practical directions for planning, dyeing, and cutting are:

*Clothes: On and Off the Stage*, Helena Chalmers. Appleton, New York.

*Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs*, Constance Mackay. Holt, New York.

*Stage Costuming*, Agnes Young. Macmillan, New York.

If you are planning a *pageant*, *The Art of Producing Pageants* by Esther Willard Bates (W. H. Baker, New York) is helpful.

#### On *make-up*:

*The Art of Theatrical Make-up*, Cavendish Morton. A. and C. Black, London.

*The Art of Make-up*, Helena Chalmers. Appleton, New York.

#### On *acting*:

*The Art of Pantomime*, Charles Aubert. Holt, New York.

*How's Your Second Act?* Arthur Hopkins. Knopf, New York.

*The Theatre in Life*, Nicolai Evreinoff. Brentano, New York.

*Theatre Practice*, Stark Young. Scribners, New York.

#### For *speech*:

*The Art of Breathing*, Leo Kofler. Werner, New York.

*Mind and Voice*, S. S. Curry. Boston Expression Company.

*Psychology of Speech*, Sara Stinchfield. Boston Expression Company.

*Public Speaking To-day*, Lockwood and Thorpe. Sanborn, New York.



*The Speaking Voice*, Katherine Jewell Everts. Harper, New York.

*The Speech Arts*, A. E. Craig. Macmillan, New York.

*Speech Pathology with Methods of Speech Correction*, Sara Stinchfield. Boston Expression Company.

*Voice, Expression, and Gesture*, Robert Blackman. John Grant, Edinburgh.

In *criticism and history of the drama* there is a mass of material. A few books are:

*British and American Drama of To-day*. Holt, New York.

*Continental Drama of To-day*. Holt, New York.

*A Study of the Modern Drama, A Handbook for the Study and Appreciation of the Best Plays*, Barrett. Appleton, New York.

*Drama and the Stage*, Ludwig Lewisohn. Harcourt, Brace, New York.

*Essays on Modern Dramatists*, W. L. Phelps. Macmillan, New York.

*European Dramatists*, Archibald Henderson. Stewart Kidd, Cincinnati.

*History of the Theatre in America*, Arthur Hornblow. Lippincott, Philadelphia.

*Iconoclasts*, James Hueneker. Scribners, New York.

*Modern Drama*, Ludwig Lewisohn. Huebsch, New York.

*Modern Dramatists*, Ashley Dukes. J. Palmer, London.

*Our American Theatre*, Oliver Sayler. Brentano, New York.

*Playwrights of the New American Theatre*, Thomas Dickinson. Macmillan, New York.

*A Short History of the Drama*, M. I. F. Bellinger. Holt, New York.

*Story of the Theatre*, Glenn Hughes. French, New York.

For *playwriting* there is:

*Playmaking; A Manual of Craftsmanship*, William Archer. Small, Maynard, Boston.

*The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play*, Percival Wilde. Little, Brown, Boston.

*The Technique of the One-Act Play*, B. R. Lewis. Luce, Boston.

*How You Can Write Plays, a Practical Guide Book*, Mark Swan. French, New York.

*Playwriting for Profit*, A. E. Krows. Longmans, Green, New York.

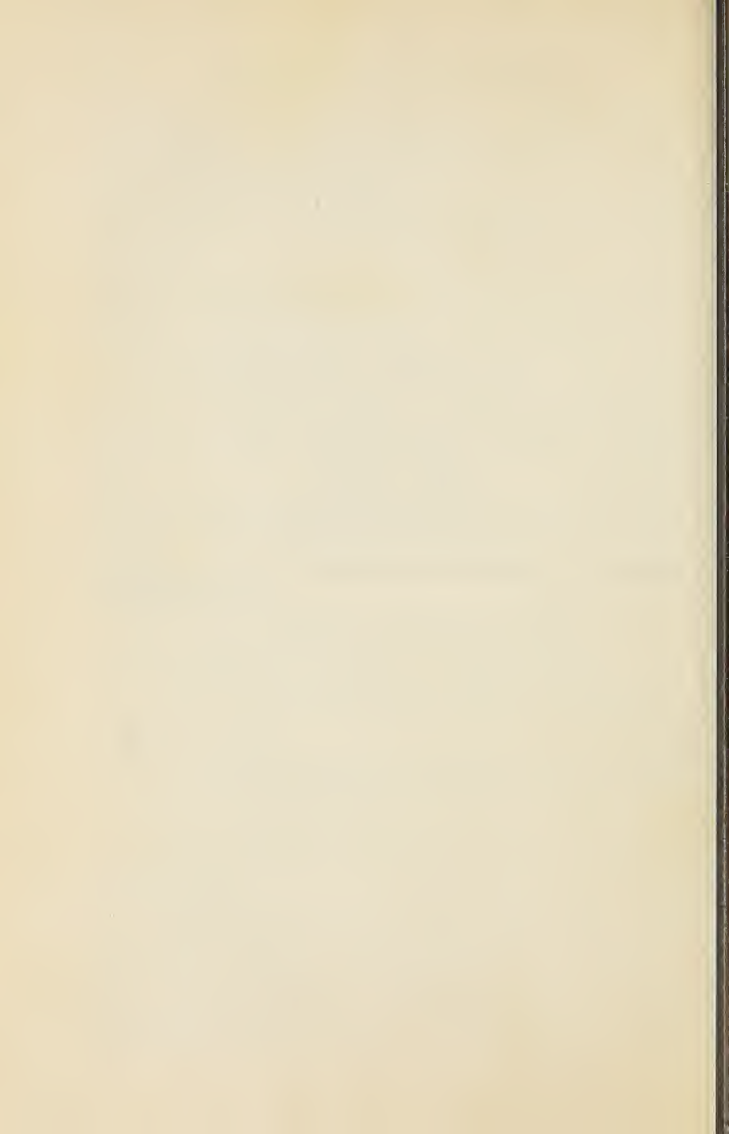


## PART TWO

### ONE-ACT PLAYS

MRS. RITTER. Oh, it's just a one-act play — in one act, you know.  
— *The Torchbearers.*







# A NIGHT AT AN INN

*A Play in One Act*

LORD DUNSANY

## CHARACTERS

A. E. SCOTT-FORTESQUE (*The Toff*), a dilapidated gentleman

WILLIAM JONES ( <i>Bill</i> )	} merchant sailors
ALBERT THOMAS	
JACOB SMITH ( <i>Sniggers</i> )	

FIRST PRIEST OF KLESH

SECOND PRIEST OF KLESH

THIRD PRIEST OF KLESH

KLESH

*The curtain rises on a room in an inn. SNIGGERS and BILL are talking, THE TOFF is reading a paper. ALBERT sits a little apart.*

SNIGGERS. What's his idea, I wonder?

BILL. I don't know.

SNIGGERS. And how much longer will he keep us here?

BILL. We've been here three days.

SNIGGERS. And 'aven't seen a soul.

BILL. And a pretty penny it cost us when he rented the pub.

SNIGGERS. 'Ow long did 'e rent the pub for?

BILL. You never know with him.

SNIGGERS. It's lonely enough.



BILL. 'Ow long did you rent the pub for, Toffy? [THE TOFF *continues to read a sporting paper; he takes no notice of what is said.*]

SNIGGERS. 'E's such a toff.

BILL. Yet 'e's clever, no mistake.

SNIGGERS. Those clever ones are the beggars to make a muddle. Their plans are clever enough, but they don't work, and then they make a mess of things much worse than you or me.

BILL. Ah!

SNIGGERS. I don't like this place.

BILL. Why not?

SNIGGERS. I don't like the looks of it.

BILL. He's keeping us here because here those niggers can't find us. The three heathen priests what was looking for us so. But we want to go and sell our ruby soon.

ALBERT. There's no sense in it.

BILL. Why not, Albert?

ALBERT. Because I gave those black devils the slip in Hull.

BILL. You give 'em the slip, Albert?

ALBERT. The slip, all three of them. The fellows with the gold spots on their foreheads. I had the ruby then and I give them the slip in Hull.

BILL. How did you do it, Albert?

ALBERT. I had the ruby and they were following me.

BILL. Who told them you had the ruby? You didn't show it.

ALBERT. No. . . . But they kind of know.

SNIGGERS. They kind of know, Albert?

ALBERT. Yes, they know if you've got it. Well, they sort of mouched after me, and I tells a policeman and he



says, O, they were only three poor niggers and they wouldn't hurt me. Ugh! When I thought of what they did in Malta to poor old Jim.

BILL. Yes, and to George in Bombay before we started.

SNIGGERS. Ugh!

BILL. Why didn't you give 'em in charge?

ALBERT. What about the ruby, Bill?

BILL. Ah!

ALBERT. Well, I did better than that. I walks up and down through Hull. I walks slow enough. And then I turns a corner and I runs. I never sees a corner but I turns it. But sometimes I let a corner pass just to fool them. I twists about like a hare. Then I sits down and waits. No priests.

SNIGGERS. What?

ALBERT. No heathen black devils with gold spots on their face. I give 'em the slip.

BILL. Well done, Albert!

SNIGGERS [*after a sigh of content*]. Why didn't you tell us?

ALBERT. 'Cause 'e won't let you speak. 'E's got 'is plans and 'e thinks we're silly folk. Things must be done 'is way. And all the time I've give 'em the slip. Might 'ave 'ad one o' them crooked knives in him before now but for me who give 'em the slip in Hull.

BILL. Well done, Albert! Do you hear that, Toffy? Albert has give 'em the slip.

THE TOFF. Yes, I hear.

SNIGGERS. Well, what do you say to that?

THE TOFF. O . . . Well done, Albert!

ALBERT. And what a' you going to do?

THE TOFF. Going to wait.

ALBERT. Don't seem to know what 'e's waiting for.



SNIGGERS. It's a nasty place.

ALBERT. It's getting silly, Bill. Our money's gone and we want to sell the ruby. Let's get on to a town.

BILL. But 'e won't come.

ALBERT. Then we'll leave him.

SNIGGERS. We'll go to London.

BILL. But 'e must 'ave 'is share.

SNIGGERS. All right. Only let's go. [*To THE TOFF.*] We're going, do you hear? Give us the ruby.

THE TOFF. Certainly. [*He gives them a ruby from his waistcoat pocket; it is the size of a small hen's egg. He goes on reading his paper.*]

ALBERT. Come on, Sniggers.

[*Exeunt ALBERT and SNIGGERS*]

BILL. Good-by, old man. We'll give you your fair share, but there's nothing to do here — no girls, no halls, and we must sell the ruby.

THE TOFF. I'm not a fool, Bill.

BILL. No, no, of course not. Of course you ain't and you've helped us a lot. Good-by. You'll say good-by?

THE TOFF. Oh, yes. Good-by. [*Still reads his paper.*]

[*Exit BILL*]

THE TOFF *puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on with his papers. After a moment the three men come rushing in again, frightened.*

SNIGGERS [*out of breath*]. We've come back, Toffy.

THE TOFF. So you have.

ALBERT. Toffy. . . . How did they get here?

THE TOFF. They walked, of course.

ALBERT. But it's eighty miles.

SNIGGERS. Did you know they were here, Toffy?



THE TOFF. Expected them about now.

ALBERT. Eighty miles!

BILL. Toffy, old man . . . what are we to do?

THE TOFF. Ask Albert.

BILL. If they can do things like this, there's no one can save us but you, Toffy. . . . I always knew you were a clever one. We won't be fools any more. We'll obey you, Toffy.

THE TOFF. You're brave enough and strong enough. There isn't many that would steal a ruby eye out of an idol's head, and such an idol as that was to look at, and on such a night. You're brave enough, Bill. But you're all three of you fools. Jim would have none of my plans, and where's Jim? And George. What did they do to him?

SNIGGERS. Don't, Toffy!

THE TOFF. Well, then, your strength is no use to you. You want cleverness; or they'll have you the way they had George and Jim.

ALL. Ugh!

THE TOFF. Those black priests would follow you round the world in circles. Year after year, till they got the idol's eye. And if we died with it, they'd follow our grandchildren. That fool thinks he can escape from men like that by running round three streets in the town of Hull.

ALBERT. God's truth, you 'aven't escaped them, because they're 'ere.

THE TOFF. So I supposed.

ALBERT. You supposed!

THE TOFF. Yes, I believe there's no announcement in the Society papers. But I took this country seat especially to receive them. There's plenty of room if you dig, it is .



pleasantly situated, and, what is more important, it is in a very quiet neighborhood. So I am at home to them this afternoon.

BILL. Well, you're a deep one.

THE TOFF. And remember, you've only my wits between you and death, and don't put your futile plans against those of an educated gentleman.

ALBERT. If you're a gentleman, why don't you go about among gentlemen instead of the likes of us?

THE TOFF. Because I was too clever for them as I am too clever for you.

ALBERT. Too clever for them?

THE TOFF. I never lost a game of cards in my life.

BILL. You never lost a game?

THE TOFF. Not when there was money in it.

BILL. Well, well!

THE TOFF. Have a game of poker?

ALL. No, thanks.

THE TOFF. Then do as you're told.

BILL. All right, Toffy.

SNIGGERS. I saw something just then. Hadn't we better draw the curtains?

THE TOFF. No.

SNIGGERS. What?

THE TOFF. Don't draw the curtains.

SNIGGERS. O, all right.

BILL. But, Toffy, they can see us. One doesn't let the enemy do that. I don't see why . . .

THE TOFF. No, of course you don't.

BILL. O, all right, Toffy. [*All begin to pull out revolvers.*]

THE TOFF [*putting his own away*]. No revolvers, please.

ALBERT. Why not?



THE TOFF. Because I don't want any noise at my party. We might get guests that hadn't been invited. Knives are a different matter. [*All draw knives. THE TOFF signs to them not to draw them yet. TOFFY has already taken back his ruby.*]

BILL. I think they're coming, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Not yet.

ALBERT. When will they come?

THE TOFF. When I am quite ready to receive them. Not before.

SNIGGERS. I should like to get this over.

THE TOFF. Should? Then we'll have them now.

SNIGGERS. Now?

THE TOFF. Yes. Listen to me. You shall do as you see me do. You will all pretend to go out. I'll show you how. I've got the ruby. When they see me alone they will come for their idol's eye.

BILL. How can they tell like this which of us has it?

THE TOFF. I confess I don't know, but they seem to.

SNIGGERS. What will you do when they come in?

THE TOFF. I shall do nothing.

SNIGGERS. What?

THE TOFF. They will creep up behind me. Then, my friends, Sniggers and Bill and Albert, who gave them the slip, will do what they can.

BILL. All right, Toffy. Trust us.

THE TOFF. If you're a little slow, you will see enacted the cheerful spectacle that accompanied the demise of Jim.

SNIGGERS. Don't, Toffy. We'll be there, all right.

THE TOFF. Very well. Now watch me. [*He goes past the window to the inner door R. He opens it inwards; then, under cover of the open door, he slips down on his knee and*



*closes it, remaining on the inside, appearing to have gone out. He signs to the others, who understand. Then he appears to reënter in the same manner.]*

THE TOFF. Now, I shall sit with my back to the door. You go out one by one, so far as our friends can make out. Crouch very low to be on the safe side. They mustn't see you through the window.

*[BILL makes his sham exit*

THE TOFF. Remember, no revolvers. The police are, I believe, proverbially inquisitive. *[The other two follow BILL. All three are now crouching inside the door R. THE TOFF puts the ruby beside him on the table. He lights a cigarette. The door at the back opens so slowly that you can hardly say at what moment it began. THE TOFF picks up his paper. A native of India wriggles along the floor ever so slowly, seeking cover from chairs. He moves L. where THE TOFF is. The three sailors are R. SNIGGERS and ALBERT lean forward. Bill's arm keeps them back. An arm-chair had better conceal them from the Indian. The black PRIEST nears THE TOFF. BILL watches to see if any more are coming. Then he leaps forward alone — he has taken his boots off and knifes the PRIEST. The PRIEST tries to shout but Bill's left hand is over his mouth. THE TOFF continues to read his sporting paper. He never looks around.]*

BILL *[sotto voce]*. There's only one, Toffy. What shall we do?

THE TOFF *[without turning his head]*. Only one?

BILL. Yes.

THE TOFF. Wait a moment. Let me think. *[Still apparently absorbed in his paper]*. Ah, yes. You go back, Bill. We must attract another guest. . . . Now, are you ready?



BILL. Yes.

THE TOFF. All right. You shall now see my demise at my Yorkshire residence. You must receive guests for me. [*He leaps up in full view of the window, flings up both arms and falls to the floor near the dead PRIEST.*] Now, be ready. [*His eyes close. There is a long pause. Again the door opens, very, very slowly. Another PRIEST creeps in. He has three golden spots upon his forehead. He looks round, then he creeps up to his companion and turns him over and looks inside of his clenched hands. Then he looks at the recumbent TOFF. Then he creeps toward him. BILL slips after him and knifes him like the other with his left hand over his mouth.*]

BILL [*sotto voce*]. We've only got two, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Still another.

BILL. What'll we do?

THE TOFF [*sitting up*]. Hum.

BILL. This is the best way, much.

THE TOFF. Out of the question. Never play the same game twice.

BILL. Why not, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Doesn't work if you do.

BILL. Well?

THE TOFF. I have it, Albert. You will now walk into the room. I showed you how to do it.

ALBERT. Yes.

THE TOFF. Just run over here and have a fight at this window with these two men.

ALBERT. But they're . . .

THE TOFF. Yes, they're dead, my perspicuous Albert. But Bill and I are going to resuscitate them. . . . Come on. [*BILL picks up a body under the arms.*]



THE TOFF. That's right, Bill. [*Does the same.*] Come and help us, Sniggers. [SNIGGERS comes.] Keep low, keep low. Wave their arms about, Sniggers. Don't show yourself. Now, Albert, over you go. Our Albert is slain. Back you get, Bill. Back, Sniggers. Still, Albert. Mustn't move when he comes. Not a muscle. [*A face appears at the window and stays for some time. Then the door opens and, looking craftily round, the third PRIEST enters. He looks at his companions' bodies and turns round. He suspects something. He takes up one of the knives and with a knife in each hand he puts his back to the wall. He looks to the left and right.*]

THE TOFF. Come on, Bill. [*The PRIEST rushes to the door. THE TOFF knifes the last PRIEST from behind.*]

THE TOFF. A good day's work, my friends.

BILL. Well done, Toffy. Oh, you are a deep one!

ALBERT. A deep one if ever there was one.

SNIGGERS. There ain't any more, Bill, are there?

THE TOFF. No more in the world, my friends.

BILL. Aye, that's all there are. There were only three in the temple. Three priests and their beastly idol.

ALBERT. What is it worth, Toffy? Is it worth a thousand pounds?

THE TOFF. It's worth all they've got in the shop. Worth just whatever we like to ask for it.

ALBERT. Then we're millionaires now.

THE TOFF. Yes, and what is more important, we no longer have any heirs.

BILL. We'll have to sell it now.

ALBERT. That won't be easy. It's a pity it isn't small and we had half a dozen. Hadn't the idol any other on him?



BILL. No, he was green jade all over and only had this one eye. He had it in the middle of his forehead and was a long sight uglier than anything else in the world.

SNIGGERS. I'm sure we ought all to be very grateful to Toffy.

BILL. And, indeed, we ought.

ALBERT. If it hadn't been for him . . .

BILL. Yes, if it hadn't been for old Toffy . . .

SNIGGERS. He's a deep one.

THE TOFF. Well, you see I just have a knack of fore-seeing things.

SNIGGERS. I should think you did.

BILL. Why, I don't suppose anything happens that our Toff doesn't foresee. Does it, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Well, I don't think it does, Bill. I don't think it often does.

BILL. Life is no more than just a game of cards to our old Toff.

THE TOFF. Well, we've taken these fellows' trick.

SNIGGERS [*going to window*]. It wouldn't do for anyone to see them.

THE TOFF. Oh, nobody will come this way. We're all alone on a moor.

BILL. Where will we put them?

THE TOFF. Bury them in the cellar, but there's no hurry.

BILL. And what then, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Why, then we'll go to London and upset the ruby business. We have really come through this job very nicely.

BILL. I think the first thing that we ought to do is to give a little supper to old Toffy. We'll bury these fellows to-night.



ALBERT. Yes, let's.

SNIGGERS. The very thing!

BILL. And we'll all drink his health.

ALBERT. Good old Toffy!

SNIGGERS. He ought to have been a general or a premier.  
*They get bottles from cupboard, etc.*

THE TOFF. Well, we've earned our bit of a supper.  
*They sit down.*

BILL [*glass in hand*]. Here's to old Toffy, who guessed everything.

ALBERT and SNIGGERS. Good old Toffy!

BILL. Toffy, who saved our lives and made our fortunes.

ALBERT and SNIGGERS. Hear! Hear!

THE TOFF. And here's to Bill, who saved me twice to-night.

BILL. Couldn't have done it but for your cleverness, Toffy.

SNIGGERS. Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear!

ALBERT. He foresees everything.

BILL. A speech, Toffy. A speech from our general.

ALL. Yes, a speech.

SNIGGERS. A speech.

THE TOFF. Well, get me some water. This whisky's too much for my head, and I must keep it clear till our friends are safe in the cellar.

BILL. Water? Yes, of course. Get him some water, Sniggers.

SNIGGERS. We don't use water here. Where shall I get it?

BILL. Outside in the garden.

[*Exit* SNIGGERS]

ALBERT. Here's to future!



BILL. Here's to Albert Thomas, Esquire.

ALBERT. And William Jones, Esquire.

*Reënter* SNIGGERS, *terrified*

THE TOFF. Hullo, here's Jacob Smith, Esquire, J. P., alias Sniggers, back again.

SNIGGERS. Toffy, I've been thinking about my share in that ruby. I don't want it, Toffy; I don't want it.

THE TOFF. Nonsense, Sniggers. Nonsense.

SNIGGERS. You shall have it, Toffy, you shall have it yourself, only say Sniggers has no share in this 'ere ruby. Say it, Toffy, say it!

BILL. Want to turn informer, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS. No, no. Only I don't want the ruby, Toffy. . . .

THE TOFF. No more nonsense, Sniggers. We're all in together in this. If one hangs, we all hang; but they won't outwit me. Besides, it's not a hanging affair, they had their knives.

SNIGGERS. Toffy, Toffy, I always treated you fair, Toffy. I was always one to say, Give Toffy a chance. Take back my share, Toffy.

THE TOFF. What's the matter? What are you driving at?

SNIGGERS. Take it back, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Answer me, what are you up to?

SNIGGERS. I don't want my share any more.

BILL. Have you seen the police? [ALBERT *pulls out his knife*.]

THE TOFF. No, no knives, Albert.

ALBERT. What then?

THE TOFF. The honest truth in open court, barring the ruby. We were attacked.



SNIGGERS. There's no police.

THE TOFF. Well, then, what's the matter?

BILL. Out with it.

SNIGGERS. I swear to God . . .

ALBERT. Well?

THE TOFF. Don't interrupt.

SNIGGERS [*in tears*]. O Toffy, Toffy, take it back. Take my share. Say you take it.

THE TOFF. What has he seen? [*Dead silence, only broken by Sniggers' sobs. Then steps are heard. Enter a hideous IDOL. It is blind and gropes its way. It gropes its way to the ruby and picks it up and screws it into a socket in the forehead. SNIGGERS still weeps softly, the rest stare in horror. THE IDOL steps out, not groping. It steps away, then stops.*]

THE TOFF. O, great heavens!

ALBERT [*in a childish, plaintive voice*]. What is it, Toffy?

BILL. Albert, it is that obscene idol [*in a whisper*] come from India.

ALBERT. It is gone.

BILL. It has taken its eye.

SNIGGERS. We are saved.

A VOICE OFF [*with outlandish accent*]. Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman. [THE TOFF *has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.*]

BILL. Albert, Albert, what is this? [*He rises and walks out. One moan is heard. SNIGGERS goes to the window. He falls back sickly.*]

ALBERT [*in a whisper*]. What has happened?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it. I have seen it. O, I have seen it!

*He returns to table.*



THE TOFF [*laying his hand very gently on Sniggers' arm, speaking softly and winningly*]. What was it, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it.

ALBERT. What?

SNIGGERS. O!

VOICE. Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

ALBERT. Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

SNIGGERS [*clutching him*]. Don't move.

ALBERT [*going*]. Toffy, Toffy.

[*Exit*

VOICE. Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

SNIGGERS. I can't go, Toffy, I can't go. I can't do it.

[*He goes*

VOICE. Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

THE TOFF. I did not foresee it.

[*Exit*

CURTAIN



## THE WEATHER BREEDER

MERRILL DENISON

## CHARACTERS

OLD JOHN, *a backwoods farmer*LIZE, *his daughter*JIM } *two helpers*  
LEVI }MURL, *a boat owner*

*The scene is in a back-country shack, situated on a lake farm and inaccessible except by water. The room has the appearance of a camp rather than that of a permanent abode, for it is used only when JOHN is working his lake farm. Two chairs have been placed in front of the window at the left. One faces the window while the second one is sideways to it as if it had been used as a support for someone's foot. Beside the door, on a low bench, are a pail of water and tin dipper. Sunshine pours through the window, flooding the far end of the kitchen table with light.*

LIZE, *a woman of twenty, enters at the rear door and begins arranging the piled-up dishes on the table. A moment later JIM, a gay, happy fellow of twenty-three, comes through the other door and turns to the water pail. He is hot and sweaty and has been working hard, evidently, for he pays no attention to LIZE until he has finished drinking. When he does turn to her, she retreats behind the table. They move around the table with cautious quietness as if they were both afraid of disturbing someone in the back room.*

JIM *soon tires of trying to catch her and stops dead, assuming a hurt, pleading air which is more successful. LIZE relents*



*but before edging cautiously around the table she warns him to keep quiet and, after kissing him quickly, shoves him away.*

LIZE. No, Jim, no! Paw might come in any minute. He's awful sour this afternoon. Besides you ought to be gettin' on with that grain and gettin' it down to the shore.

JIM [*peevishly*]. What's he got but thirty bags to carry down. Levi and me has most two hundred on the shore now and the motor boat ain't around the head of the bay yet. Can't see what he's got to be sour for. He ain't done nothin' but set. Sour?

LIZE. Yes, he's sourer'n I've ever seen him before.

JIM. It's his leg.

LIZE [*shaking her head in a slow, mystified way*]. No it ain't his leg. He'll jest sot hisself down in that chair and set and set and kinda keep mumblin' to hisself. Swearin', soft and low, like he wasn't happy.

JIM [*worried*]. It ain't loud swearin', eh?

LIZE [*hopelessly*]. No, Jim, it's awful gentle.. I get to wishin', when I'm here alone with him sometimes and you carryin' them bags down to the shore, that he'd curse like he used to and break the store or somethun. He ain't like hisself. And Jim, he ain't gettin' any more kindly towards you and me.

JIM [*indignantly*]. What's he got agin me? Ain't I done my share of the work, all summer'n fall . . . 'n last spring?

LIZE [*anxiously*]. Jim, don't talk so loud. He'll hear you.

JIM. I don't care if he does. [*But he lowers his voice and leans across the table to speak.*] Ain't I helped him plow'n seed and done most of the reapin'? Ain't I run the threshin' engine'n ain't I been luggin' grain about half a



mile down to the shore for two days? Ain't I? It ain't my fault he's got his foot caught in the belt of the thresher.

LIZE. He ain't said it is [*sighing*]. He's jest sour.

JIM. What's makin' him sour? Did you ast him?

LIZE. I ain't ast him but I've kinda hinted he weren't any cheerfuller'n he had to be. He just growled.

JIM. It ain't the crop. We's the best one they's been in years. He oughta make quite a bit outen the farm even though it is ten miles from the village and there ain't a road you can get to it on. Seems kinda queer. [*He looks out the window and the sight of the fall sunlight restores his gayety.*] Look! Feelin' sour and a sun like that. Lookut, Lize.

*LIZE turns and looks out the window with a touch of wistfulness. JIM creeps around the table behind her but she turns just before he takes her in his arms and tries to evade him.*

LIZE [*watching the door at the rear*]. Jim, it ain't right. Paw'll hear you and come out. And besides, you ought to be gettin' them bags down.

JIM [*turning away, disgustedly*]. Aw! It ain't no wonder your paw's sour.

LIZE. I jest seen Levi go past. He's workin'.

JIM. Ain't I been workin'? I been carryin' two to his one all day. And I come in fer a minute . . . to get a drink and you're tryin' to histe me outen the door. Levi was here for a good half-hour this mornin'. You didn't try to histe *him* out.

LIZE. He was talkin' to paw.

JIM. It seems like you didn't want me hangin' around, to my way of thinkin'.

LIZE. Jim!



JIM. And it ain't as if you hadn't promised me. If I hadn't been shinin' up to you . . .

LIZE [*wearily*]. Don't be foolish, Jim. You know we can't go agin' paw, not when he's sour, anyways. You ain't got a thing to get married on till your shares of the crop. Not a thing. I wished you had but you ain't. And paw's gettin' sourer'n sourer every day we stay up here.

JIM [*moving toward the door disgruntled*]. Well, I'll be gettin' sourer myself. I got a right to be gettin' sour, he ain't. All he does is sit there and watch us work. Why don't he sit outside in the sun instead of stickin' around here?

LIZE. He don't seem to like it so outside. Every time he goes to the door he seems to get worse'n sourer. Jim, I wish you'd go back to work . . . afore he comes.

JIM [*with a "you'll be sorry when I'm dead" sort of air*]. All right, I'll go. I'll go.

LIZE [*relenting a little*]. Jim.

JIM. I ain't goin' to be Jimmed. 'N lookut! I'm goin' to see your paw and I'll say to him, I'll say, lookut. You ain't the only one around here that's gettin' sour.

*He turns toward the door and opens it quickly and angrily and takes a step to go out but runs into LEVI, who is coming in. LEVI, a young back-country lad, is hot and tired as JIM was and immensely cheerful.*

LEVI. Look out, Jim. Holy, old Lincoln but she's a great day, ain't she? I never seen such weather. [*He turns to the bucket.*] There ain't been a cloud in the sky for three weeks'n she's gettin' in for the middle of October. The hardwoods is hardly turned yet.



JIM. How many bags is down?

LEVI. I brung down six more.

JIM. Where'd you put 'em?

LEVI. Right on the shore with the rest.

LIZE. Levi, did you see the motor boat in the bay? Paw says he might try and get down to-night.

LEVI. I thought he was figgerin' on a hunt for a couple of days. Them back fields is full of birds.

JIM. Lize, he ain't goin' down right away?

LIZE. It's hard to tell what he'll do, he's so sour. [*She moves toward the door and listens.*] Sh! He's comin'. [*Anxiously.*] Go on to work, afore he comes. Hurry. It'll only make him sourer if he sees you here.

*The two young men start to move quietly toward the outer door but, before they have taken more than a step or two, the rear door opens and OLD JOHN appears. He stands there looking at the boys, the picture of complete and absolute gloom. As LIZE has remarked, he is sour.*

JOHN. Gerhh!

LEVI. Har . . . harye, Mr. Hawley?

JIM. We jest been gettin' a drink. Kinda hot, eh? Fine day.

JOHN. Gerhh!

LEVI. Great day for workin'.

JOHN. Why don't you work then?

LIZE. Come and sit in your chair, paw, where you can see outside. Over here in the sun.

JOHN [*an even more vicious growl*]. Gerhhh! Sun? Gerhhh!

JOHN *hobbles over toward the chair, assisted by LIZE, who is most tender. The two boys are too embarrassed to leave and wait, awkwardly.*



LEVI. Shame you can't get out and around these days, Mr. Hawley. They's never been such a fall. You'd feel better. It'd get your mind off'n that foot.

JOHN [*easing himself into the chair*]. My mind ain't on my foot. Look out there Lize! Watch how you move that leg. It ain't cordwood. Lift her up. Easy! There. [*He cranes his neck so that he may look out.*] Look at that sun pourin' in. Can't you move this here chair so's I can see somethun? [JIM *takes the chair and moves it the wrong way.*] No! No! The other way. Can't you see I can't see out where you're movin' it?

JIM. I thought you wanted to get outen the sun.

LEVI. We might rig a paper or somethun over the window, there. Might kinda kill the glare.

JOHN. What'd I want to kill the glare for? It'd be still there wouldn't it? What's it like out?

LIZE. Oh, paw, it's lovely. It couldn't be nicer. There ain't a cloud in the sky.

JIM [*doing his best to cheer JOHN up*]. Ain't never been such a month. Jest one day follerin' another like this. Warm and sunshiny with a little haze on the hills. There ain't been a cloud. . . .

JOHN [*in a perfect fury*]. You're fools, the pack of you.

LIZE. Paw!

JOHN. Fools. Don't you know nothin'?

LEVI. I know we've got most of the grain down. There ain't but thirty bags left.

JOHN. They'll all be spoilt.

LIZE. I can't see what you're so crabbed and sour about, paw. It seems to me you're gettin' sourer'n sourer'n, there ain't a thing we do'll ever please you. [*She begins to cry.*]



JIM. Yes, Lize is right. You done nothin' but grumble since we come up here, and there ain't been a thing wrong. There ain't been a day we've had to stop work. Lookut to-day and you're kickin' about the weather. What do you want? The sun to shine all night?

JOHN. They's weather breeders, I tell you. We ain't had a day since we come up here that wasn't a weather breeder. Jest one damn day like this after another. All weather breeders. [*Trying to rise from his chair, angrily.*] And we'll pay for it. It ain't natural to have three weeks without a storm and the longer she waits the worse she'll be. We'll have to pay for it.

JIM. You been sayin' that every day that comes along that ain't near zero or they ain't a cloud-burst. Just let the sun poke out from behind a cloud and you says it's a weather breeder. To my way of thinkin' you're getting so sour you can't tell a good day when you see it. You're sick!

JOHN. I ain't sick. I ain't sour. It's them damn weather breeders gets on a feller's nerves.

LEVI. Well, what if they is weather breeders? Ain't most of the grain piled on the shore? And Murl'll be here anytime with the boats.

LIZE. He said he'd make four or five trips to-night because there'll be a full moon. What do you see, paw?

JOHN [*who has been leaning forward, disappointedly*]. Ain't nothin'. I thought for a minute I seen a cloud, but it ain't. What did you pile them bags on the shore for?

LEVI. It's the easiest place to load 'em into the boats.

JOHN. Why didn't you put 'em into the shack, like I said.



JIM. Weren't no sense makin' a double haul. There ain't no danger where they is.

JOHN. What if it storms . . . like it will?

LEVI [*laughing*]. It ain't goin' to storm, Mr. Hawley. Keepin' in the house is kinda makin' you heavy.

JOHN. I ain't heavy. What if a west wind blows up . . . which it will?

JIM. There ain't been a wind fer a month.

LIZE. Paw, perhaps you'd like some tea?

JOHN. No, I wouldn't like some tea.

LIZE. Why don't you light your pipe, paw?

JOHN. Because I ain't got it.

LIZE [*very patiently*]. Where did you leave it, paw?

JOHN. I don't know where I left it. I don't care where I left it, neither. Gerhh! Look at that sky!

JIM. See if you can see any signs of Murl and the boat yet, Levi.

[LEVI goes out the door at the side]

JOHN. Gerhhh! That infernal motor boat. Somethun'll get intull her in the middle of the lake like it always does. Fool notion to drag a couple of tons of grain around the big lake with them there squalls that come up.

LIZE [*wearily*]. Paw, there ain't been a wind for a month. Can't you stop grumblin' for a little! It ain't our fault the weather's been so good.

JOHN. I ain't sayin' it is, am I? But that's no excuse for you three enjoyin' it the way you do. The trouble with you is you don't know nothin'. We ought to had a storm when the moon turned. You think it's all right not to have a storm with the moon, don't you? Ain't got enough sense to know better. [LIZE and JIM have been



*carrying on a surreptitious flirtation behind his back.*] You think. . . . Ain't you listenin'?

LIZE. Why, paw, why shouldn't we be listenin'?

JOHN. There ain't been an equalnoxiial gale this year. Not an equalnoxiial oncet. Do you know what that means?

JIM. Kinda lucky we missed her for oncet, eh?

JOHN. Gerh! We ain't missed her. She's savin' herself up. Lookut it. [*Waving toward the window.*] Same haze they's been on the hills for a month. Not a breath of air movin'. Nothin' but weather breeders. Lize!

LIZE [*jumping away from JIM*]. What is it, paw?

JOHN. What are you doin' there?

LIZE. Nothin', paw, just listenin' to you. What do you want?

JOHN. I want my pipe. [*Hearing no movement behind him.*] Lize!

LIZE. Yes, paw. [*Motioning JIM to leave.*]

JOHN. My pipe. Lize! What are you doin' anyway? Still listenin'? [*Looking around.*] You still hangin' around Jim? Why don't you get them bags down?

JIM. There ain't no hurry. The boat ain't here yet and there'll be a full moon to-night.

[LIZE goes into the other room]

JOHN. You're nothin' but a fool with as much brains intul your head as a loon that's lost her mate. You're carcallatin' this'll keep up forever; just because they was a moon last night they's goin' to be one to-night.

JIM [*defensively*]. You couldn't ask for a better day.

JOHN [*indignantly*]. Ain't that what I been tellin' you for three weeks? Every day for three weeks you says it's the best day you ever seen and what did I say, eh? Tell me that!



JIM. Every day you says it was a weather breeder.

JOHN. And I was right and the storm she's breedin' ll drown us when it comes.

JIM. Aw, you're actin' like a cow in fly time. You old lads always figger you can tell about the weather and I ain't never seen one of youse ever get it right, yet. Last fall, when you found that milt in the hog we butchered, you says it was going to be open winter without snow. It was the worst we seen in years. You said so yourself, when it was over. There ain't goin' to be no storm.

JOHN [*almost speechless with indignant rage*]. Get out of here. Get them bags down. [*As JIM hesitates.*] What are you hangin' around for?

JIM. I was goin' to ast you somethun.

JOHN. About Lize, I spose, eh? Comin' around whinin' to marry the girl and you ain't got nothin' in the world to call your own but them shares in that grain and it's all down on the beach and goin' to get spoiled. Don't come around here throwin' that pig's milt up in my face and then ast me to give a thanks offerin' of Lize. Lize!

LIZE *appears at the rear door and motions JIM, frantically, to go. JIM goes to the door and opens it as if to go out but immediately his attitude changes to one of anxious surprise.*

LIZE. I can't find it, paw.

JOHN. Gerhhh!

*The old man struggles out of his chair and hobbles past LIZE, who is standing in the doorway. She is watching JIM anxiously and goes to him as soon as her father has gone.*

LIZE [*anxiously*]. Jim, perhaps paw's right, after all.

JIM [*seriously*]. No, he ain't. That ain't nothin' at all.



Just some smoke from them fires north of Mallory Lake, lyin' low down. Here's Levi. He'll say it's the fires.

LEVI *comes in*

LEVI. He's just passed little Doe Island, with the little boat and towin' two row boats. Let's get them bags down and have supper and leave afterwards.

JIM. Levi, look over there back of you! What do you make of that? Smoke, ain't it?

*The two men stand looking out the open door.*

LEVI [*puzzled*]. Don't look like smoke. Lookut over there, Jim. Just beyond the swale. Lookut them birches.

JIM [*a little more anxiously, but being very careful not to draw John's attention*]. See that swirl of sand by the fence corner? There!

LEVI. Don't seem to be no wind, neither. That smoke's coming fast, Jim. Look! There's another. Kinda funny you can't hear the motor boat engine at all.

JIM. He's close in too. See that, Levi?

LEVI. Perhaps the old lad's right after all. Look! That ain't smoke, behind the big rock. And look! Look! Over there. [*In an awed tone.*] Jim, she's a comin'.

JIM [*with forced indifference*]. No, it ain't nothin'. You're gettin' as bad as the old lad.

LIZE. It don't seem right to me. [*Turning to the window.*] See what it's like out here. [*She and JIM go to the window and JIM peers out.*]

LEVI. They won't be nothin' in the north. She's a comin' from the east.

JIM. You see there ain't a thing. Clear as crystal.

LEVI [*from the door*]. Here's Murl comin'. He's beached the boats.

JIM. Ain't no need of that. No sea on there.



LEVI. They's whitecaps out beyond Big Bay Point, Jim.

*JOHN returns from the other room*

JOHN [*from the door*]. Ain't you two started workin' yet?

JIM. We was gettin' a drink.

JOHN. Aw, you've drunk enough now to found a team of horses. Get on with you. What're you lookin' at, anyways. Admirin' the sunset I suppose, eh?

LEVI. We was waitin' for Murl. He's just beachin' his boats. Jim, come here. Look! Out beyond that knoll. In the Dyer Lake hardwoods.

JOHN [*starts to limp toward the door but is diverted by LIZE*]. What're you lookin' at, there.

LIZE. Hadn't you better sit down and rest, Paw?

*A low rumble like distant thunder is heard.*

JOHN. What's that? Murl beachin' a boat? It's so still you can hear most a mile.

LEVI [*to Jim*]. Thunder?

JIM [*nodding his head*]. Yes.

LIZE. Sit down, paw. It won't do that leg no good walkin' around on it. Sit down, paw. Sit down and let me put it up on the chair.

LEVI. Jim. Murl's callin' for us to come down.

*The two men go out hurriedly and LIZE closes the door after them, while JOHN looks out the window. The sunlight has been growing less strong.*

JOHN. Ain't it gettin' late awful early, Lize? Sun ain't gone down, surely.

LIZE. Now, paw, it's kinda hazy out, that's all. They's smoke from the Mallory Lake fires driftin' west.

JOHN [*disgustedly*]. It's these damn weather breeders. If we'd had anythin' but this sunshine them fires'd been



out long ago. [*The sunlight is hardly perceptible. Another low rumble is heard.*] How many boats has he got up anyways? That's about the third he's pulled up.

LIZE [*at the door again*]. Paw, what would happen if they was a storm come?

JOHN. We'd lose all them oats down on the shore. A couple of hundred bags and about half of the year's crop. They'd get soaked.

LIZE. Couldn't they be dried afterwards?

JOHN. Wouldn't be worth the trouble. But it's all their fault. I told 'em. That smoke seems to be gettin' thicker.

*While he is looking out of the window MURL comes in. He is a summer camper, about the same age as the other two young men, and like them is very cheerful, in contrast to JOHN.*

MURL. Hello, Lize. Hello, Mr. Hawley. How are you? Fine weather we've been having, isn't it? I've never seen such a fall in my life. Beautiful. Wonderful, mellow sunshine every day. Now, if you only had autumns like this every year, eh? Perfect.

JOHN [*very sourly*]. Perfect? They's nothin' but weather breeders. Enough to take the heart outen a man.

MURL. Why, what's the trouble, Mr. Hawley? You're not like yourself at all. You're usually working around, cheerful and whistling and having a great time. Enjoying life. Is that foot bothering you as much as all that? It must have been a nasty accident.

JOHN [*disagreeably*]. Got nothin' to do with the foot. It's this damn weather. Look out there.

MURL. Beautiful, isn't it? Almost think it was August



instead of this late in the year. I noticed that it is looking pretty dark over toward the east.

JOHN. Smoke! Beautiful! You don't know what you're talking about. What's beautiful about it? Why, we've had three solid weeks of sunshine. That ain't right. Not an equalnoxiial gale yet. Do you know what that means?

MURL [*laughing*]. Oh, you're a confirmed pessimist, Mr. Hawley.

LIZE. Paw's been sittin' at the window ever since he got his leg hurt grumblin' about how fine the weather is.

MURL. Well, by the looks of things I wouldn't be surprised if we had a change any time now.

JOHN [*with a glint of enthusiasm*]. That's what I been sayin' for the last two weeks.

MURL. The sky is beginning to look very threatening over toward the east. But I don't think it will break.

JOHN [*excitedly*]. Was it? Was it? Where? The sun's gone down already. Is it that late?

[LIZE goes outdoors unnoticed by the two men]

MURL. I don't think so. No, it's only half-past four. That's funny. [*A rumble is heard again.*] Listen, what's that?

JOHN. I figgered it was you drawin' your boats up.

MURL. I didn't draw them up. That's thunder.

JOHN [*as if it were too good to be true*]. It ain't thunder, is it? Do you think it's really thunder?

MURL. Sounds mighty like it.

JOHN [*beginning to cheer up*]. I told 'em it was a weather breeder. I told 'em it was. Let me look.

*He starts to get up and MURL opens the door and turns with a look of consternation.*



MURL. Why, Good Lord! Look at that, would you. The whole sky's black, right across. It looks like an awful storm.

JOHN [*gloating with glee*]. Let me see it. Let me see it.

MURL. Why, that'll be terrible, Mr. Hawley. All that grain down on the beach will be completely ruined, won't it?

JOHN. Sure it will. Every last kernel of it. Look at her come.

MURL. But can't we do something? Haven't you got a tarpaulin' or an old tent or something we can put over it?

JOHN [*with complete satisfaction*]. There ain't a thing. Anyways, the boys ain't got time to do a thing before she breaks. Look at them clouds. They's as black as ink. They'll be more'n one house get struck by that storm. Oh, she's a-rarin'.

MURL. But, Mr. Hawley, your whole summer's work will go for nothing. That terrible labor you three have put in on this farm, plowing that hard clay and . . .

JOHN. Here comes the wind. I wonder where Jim is. I'd like to see his face when she breaks. Tellin' me they wasn't weather breeders.

MURL. Why, it's awful to think of your losing everything, Mr. Hawley. I can remember you passing my camp every day during the summer. It's an eight-mile row up here, isn't it?

JOHN. Ten, each way.

MURL. It seems a damn shame to lose it all this way. Are you insured?

JOHN [*with utmost cheer*]. Not a cent. Listen to her. [*The sound of the wind is becoming audible and the window has darkened to a dull grey.*] Holy old Lincoln, watch her come!



MURL. Jove, it's getting dark. Where did Lize go? She'll be getting all wet.

JOHN. Serve her right. She said they wasn't weather breeders.

MURL. Why didn't you put them in that shack instead of out on the beach?

JOHN [*ignoring him*]. I knew she'd be a hell bender when she come. I knew. Look at her, Murl. She's past the Buck Lake Ridge.

MURL. Perhaps it will blow over all right. It mightn't rain a drop. It might pass to the south.

JOHN [*indignantly*]. What? Not rain a drop. Why, Murl, she's goin' to be a cloudburst. Nothin' short of it, 'n she's headed straight for us. Ain't no doubt of that.

*He hobbles back to the chair, turns it and sits down and puts his feet on the stove. He is a new man, cheerful and exultant. The approaching storm has been gathering in volume; the sunlight has been gone for some time and the interior of the shack is quite dark.*

JOHN. Have a smoke, Murl. There's nothin' to do but sit down and enjoy her, now she's come. She might be the equalnoxiol.

LIZE *comes in*

MURL. No thanks. I'm going to see where the boys are. MURL *goes out and JOHN sits by the stove enjoying his pipe and his storm*

LIZE [*in a frightened tone*]. Oh, paw, it's goin' to be an awful storm. Somethun' terrubul. Ain't there nothin' we can do?

JOHN. Nothin' but sit here and watch her. She ought to be a rip tail snorter.



LIZE [*almost frenzied*]. But paw, all them bags down on the beach. They'll be soaked through.

JOHN. They won't be worth a red cent when this rain gets at 'em. Might just as well thrown 'em away.

LIZE. It don't seem fair. All Jim's work gone for nothin'. It means we'll never be able to get married, at all. *She breaks down and weeps.* JOHN goes on smoking.

JOHN. I says every day for the last three weeks that she was a weather breeder and none of you would listen to me. No, you says, ain't it a fine day, paw? And you said I was sour and didn't know what I was talkin' about and tried to blame my foot. You thought you young ones knowed more about the signs than I did. Ha! There ain't been a day I ain't said it was a weather breeder. Not a day. And I was right, wasn't I? Lize? Quit your cryin' and tell me. I was right, wasn't I?

LIZE [*crying out lustily*]. Oh, keep quiet, paw. Keep quiet. It's too hard. A whole summer's work.

JOHN. I told them they ought to put that grain in the shack. I knowed it'd never last till the new moon. Can't fool me on a weather breeder. I seen too many of 'em. These days that is too good to be true, they's the kind to watch out for. And no equalnoxiial gale, Lize, that makes her worse. These days all fall that didn't have a thing wrong with 'em, that a feller couldn't find a thing to find fault with, not a thing, they's weather breeders and when they come that's the time to sit tight and pray for the best. [*The wind has dropped to absolute silence.*] Listen! There ain't a sound. She's about here.

LIZE. You'd think it didn't matter at all the way you're talkin'.

JOHN. Matter? Ain't I been tellin' you it mattered?



That's just what I been sayin' for three weeks. I wish the boys'd come so's I could see their faces. Throwin' that milt that come outen a half-starved pig up in my face. But I got 'em now. Listen, Lize! Ain't that the rain? Lize, look outen the door and see if she's broke.

LIZE. Oh, shut up.

JOHN [*surprised and hurt*]. Why, Lize, what a way to talk to your old paw. You ungrateful girl.

LIZE *gets up and opens the door. There is a rush of rain on the roof and through the door as LIZE opens it. She closes it with difficulty.*

JOHN. Open the door, Lize. Let's see the rain. It sounds like the whole sky was droppin' buckets.

*The door opens and JIM and LEVI burst in, both wet*

JIM. Shut the door. By the livin' twist she's goin' to pour.

LEVI. I never seen a storm come up so quick. Half an hour ago they wasn't a cloud in the sky. It's a good job we left them thirty bags in the barn.

*MURL comes in*

MURL. It looks as if it would be a terrible storm. About as bad as I've ever seen. And right on the heels of that perfect weather, too.

JIM [*sitting down*]. Seems kinda funny it couldn't've held off another day till we got that grain down.

LEVI. Sort of shoots our whole summer's work to hell, don't it? Think of the time we've rowed up here and back in the day, ten miles each way, and worked this hard clay. This is just about give me enough of farmin'. Listen to her pour. This roof won't stand an awful lot with them loose shingles.



LIZE. Oh, Jim. You won't make a cent outen the whole summer, will you?

JIM. Not a cent, Lize, except from what's left in the barn.

JOHN [*cheerfully*]. And it's mine.

MURL. It seems a dang shame after all the work you've put in on the farm this year. The bitter thanklessness of it. You know, I'm awfully sorry. [*To JOHN.*] If there's anything I can do. . . .

JIM. Yes, that's so. And you done as much work as anybody till you got hurt.

*There is complete silence for an instant. LEVI and JIM sit dejectedly. MURL is very sympathetic and LIZE is weeping softly. OLD JOHN is listening ecstatically to the storm and finally breaks into a cheerful peal of laughter.*

MURL [*anxiously*]. Why, what's the matter, Mr. Hawley? What's the matter? Don't let your loss get the better of you. Keep hold of yourself. Your friends will help you, you know.

JIM. I don't see what you got to feel so infernal cheerful over.

LIZE. Paw, stop that awful laughin'.

JOHN. Ha, ha, ha! Listen to her. Comin' down like the whole Mishinog Lake was turned upside down. By God, she's good to hear. She was a tunin' a minute ago. You lads look good and mournful now, don't you, eh? And feel kinda mournful. Didn't I tell you all them good days was nothin' but weather breeders? Didn't I say they'd breed a storm like this? Didn't I say we'd missed the equalnoxials and we'd pay for it? Eh? Didn't I, Jim?



JIM [*who has moved over to comfort LIZE*]. Yes. You've made life miserable for everybody in camp for most a month with your cheerless prophesyin'. You'd get a day from heaven, made by all the angels for God hisself, and you'd get sour and say it was a weather breeder. I hope you're happy, now, anyways. There, Lize, your paw's havin' a good time, anyways.

LIZE. Oh!

JOHN. Didn't I? I ask you, now, didn't I?

JIM. Oh, damn it. Yes, yes. If it'll please you any. Ten times a day you said it.

JOHN. You see. I knew. I said all along they was weather breeders. I told you. You can't fool me on them days when they don't seem to be a thing you could ask for to make 'em better. When you lads have farmed, like I have, for forty years, you won't be so cheerful when they's a fine day.

MURL. But, Mr. Hawley, you don't seem to appreciate your own loss. You're going crazy, man.

JOHN. Oh, no I ain't. And even if I was I'll wager none of you lads'll ever tell me I don't know what kind of a day it is again.

LEVI [*looking out the window*]. It's lettin' up a bit.

JOHN. Oh, no it ain't. Don't you fool yourselves. She'll pour most of the night. She's just takin' a new breath. I was right, wasn't I? Eh, Jim? Eh, Levi? I knew a thing or two.

LEVI. Oh, keep quiet. Ain't it bad enough to lose the whole summer's work without you chatterin' like a jay bird?

JIM [*viciously, so that his unpopularity begins to penetrate the old man's head*]. Yes. Shut up. Can't you see Lize



is bawlin' her eyes out. You may think a cloudburst's a fine thing but you're the only one that does.

JOHN. Why, Lize, what's the matter? Come here.

LIZE. I won't.

JOHN. Why . . . what's the trouble, Lize?

JIM. You give us all a pain sittin' there, sour'n last year's milk, for three weeks not able to enjoy a day and then comes along a cloudburst and you act like somebody's give you a free trip and your board to the Toronto fair. How'd you like to be figgerin' on gettin' married and waitin' till you got a stake and then seein' it wiped clean in twenty minutes, eh?

LEVI. It's a damn shame, that's what it is, Jim.

MURL. I don't blame you feeling as you do, Jim.

LIZE. And you laughin' there like you didn't care at all, paw. It's cruel.

JOHN [*persistently*]. But I was right, wasn't I? Wasn't I right?

JIM [*his temper breaking*]. Damn it, YES! You was right. Once and for all, you was right. If you'll only keep that trap of your'n closed, you was always right.

LIZE. But that don't help me and Jim none.

MURL [*who has opened the door*]. Levi, come here.

[*The two men step out and it is noticed, through the open door, that the outside is much brighter again*]

JOHN. How don't it help you and Jim?

LIZE. How can we get married now when you said you wouldn't let us till Jim'd sold his shares in the grain? There ain't any grain to sell, now. It'll be another six months at least.

JIM. But that don't matter, of course, Lize. Your paw's having such a good time outen his storm. You



oughta be happy he's cheered up. He'd been hell to live with all winter if they hadn't come some sort of a calamity. [*Through the window comes a glint of sunshine which shows on the far wall. None of the three see it.*] I got a mind to marry you anyways. Will you Lize?

LIZE. Jim, I want to but you know I promised maw I'd always ask paw before I done anythin' and I don't care nothin' about him but I don't want to break a promise to her.

JOHN [*rising*]. Why, Lize, there ain't no need to take on this way.

JIM. Don't you touch her. Go and enjoy your storm. Be cheerful while it lasts. It may be a good day to-morrow and you won't be fit to live in the same township with.

*Again the momentary flash of sunlight appears.*

JOHN [*quite humbled*]. Now, Lize, don't take on this way and rob your old paw outen all the fun he's got this fall. Lize, I didn't know you wanted to get married that bad. There ain't no reason why you and Jim can't get married.

JIM. With all the summer's crop down there on the beach soakin' wet because of your weather breedin'. How can we get married?

JOHN. You could live down at the house. Lize's got to look after one of us and she might as well look after both.

LIZE [*excitedly*]. Then we can, paw, we can!

JOHN [*a little ashamed*]. There ain't nothin' to stop it, to my way of thinkin'.

LIZE. Paw!

*She runs to him and the old man awkwardly takes her in his arms. LEVI bursts in the door in tremendous excitement.*



LEVI. Jim! Jim! There ain't nothin' but the top layer of the bags a bit wet, Jim. It ain't hardly rained a drop.

JOHN [*turning from Lize's embrace, the horror of a great disappointment on his face*]. What? It ain't stormed? We heard it. There on the roof.

LEVI. Must a been them loose shingles you heard, rattlin' in the wind.

JOHN. The grain ain't spoilt?

MURL *comes in*

MURL. It's going to be a perfectly wonderful sunset. The storm has passed off to the west. Take a look outside.

LEVI, JIM, LIZE and MURL *look out the door*. JOHN *is standing in the center of the room, a broken-hearted figure*.

JOHN. Murl, it ain't right. You don't mean it ain't rained buckets?

MURL. The storm passed to the south of here. Only a bad wind storm here.

JOHN. I don't believe it.

MURL [*pointing to the rear wall, which is bathed in sunlight*]. Look behind you, then.

JOHN *turns, sees the sunlight on the wall, goes to his chair, and sits down sour and disgusted*. JIM *stands with his arm about Lize's shoulders, looking out*.

JOHN. Gerhhh! More of them damn weather breeders.

CURTAIN



## THE PROPOSAL

ANTON CHEKOV

TRANSLATED BY JULIUS WEST

## CHARACTERS

STEPAN STEPANOVITCH CHUBUKOV, *a landowner*NATALYA STEPANOVNA, *his daughter, twenty-five years old*IVAN VASSILEVITCH LOMOV, *a neighbor of Chubukov, a large and hearty, but very suspicious landowner**Scene. A drawing-room in Chubukov's country-house.**LOMOV enters, wearing a dress jacket and white gloves.**CHUBUKOV rises to meet him.*

CHUBUKOV. My dear fellow, whom do I see! Ivan Vassilevitch! I am extremely glad! [*Squeezes his hand.*] Now this is a surprise, my darling. How are you?

LOMOV. Thank you. And how may you be getting on?

CHUBUKOV. We just get along somehow, my angel, thanks to your prayers and so on. Sit down, please do. . . . Now, you know, you shouldn't forget all about your neighbors, my darling. My dear fellow, why are you so formal in your get-up? Evening dress, gloves, and so on. Can you be going anywhere, my treasure?

LOMOV. No, I've come only to see you, honored Stepan Stepanovitch.

CHUBUKOV. Then why are you in evening dress, my precious? As if you're paying a New Year's Eve visit!

LOMOV. Well, you see, it's like this. [*Takes his arm.*] I've come to you, honored Stepan Stepanovitch, to trouble



you with a request. Not once or twice have I already had the privilege of applying to you for help, and you have always, so to speak. . . . I must ask your pardon, I am getting excited. I shall drink some water, honored Stepan Stepanovitch. [*Drinks.*]

CHUBUKOV [*aside*]. He's come to borrow money! Shan't give him any! [*Aloud.*] What is it, my beauty?

LOMOV. You see, Honor Stepanitch. . . . I beg pardon, Stepan Honoritch, . . . I mean, I'm awfully excited, as you will please notice. . . . In short, you alone can help me, though I don't deserve it, of course . . . and haven't any right to count on your assistance. . . .

CHUBUKOV. Oh, don't go round and round it, darling! Spit it out! Well?

LOMOV. One moment . . . this very minute. The fact is, I've come to ask the hand of your daughter, Natalya Stepanovna, in marriage.

CHUBUKOV [*joyfully*]. By Jove! Ivan Vassilevitch! Say it again — I didn't hear it all!

LOMOV. I have the honor to ask. . . .

CHUBUKOV [*interrupting*]. My dear fellow. . . . I'm so glad, and so on. . . . Yes, indeed, and all that sort of thing. [*Embraces and kisses LOMOV.*] I've been hoping for it for a long time. It's been my continual desire. [*Sheds a tear.*] And I've always loved you, my angel, as if you were my own son. May God give you both His help and His love and so on, and I did so much hope. . . . What am I behaving in this idiotic way for? I'm off my balance with joy, absolutely off my balance! Oh, with all my soul. . . . I'll go and call Natasha, and all that.

LOMOV [*greatly moved*]. Honored Stepan Stepanovitch, do you think I may count on her consent?



CHUBUKOV. Why, of course, my darling, and . . . as if she won't consent! She's in love; egad, she's like a lovesick cat, and so on. . . . Shan't be long!

[*Exit*

LOMOV. It's cold. . . . I'm trembling all over, just as if I'd got an examination before me. The great thing is, I must have my mind made up. If I give myself time to think, to hesitate, to talk a lot, to look for an ideal, or for real love, then I'll never get married. . . . Brr! . . . It's cold! Natalya Stepanovna is an excellent housekeeper, not bad-looking, well-educated. . . . What more do I want? But I'm getting a noise in my ears from excitement. [*Drinks.*] And it's impossible for me not to marry. . . . In the first place, I'm already thirty-five — a critical age, so to speak. In the second place, I ought to lead a quiet and regular life. . . . I suffer from palpitations, I'm excitable and always getting awfully upset. . . . At this very moment my lips are trembling, and there's a twitch in my right eyebrow. . . . But the very worst of all is the way I sleep. I no sooner get into bed and begin to go off when suddenly something in my left side — gives a pull, and I can feel it in my shoulder and head. . . . I jump up like a lunatic, walk about a bit, and lie down again, but as soon as I begin to get off to sleep there's another pull! And this may happen twenty times. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA *comes in*

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Well, there! It's you, and papa said, "Go; there's a merchant come for his goods." How do you do, Ivan Vassilevitch!

LOMOV. How do you do, honored Natalya Stepanovna?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. You must excuse my apron and negligée; we're shelling peas for drying. Why haven't you



been here for such a long time? Sit down. . . . [*They seat themselves.*] Won't you have some lunch?

LOMOV. No, thank you, I've had some already.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Then smoke. . . . Here are the matches. . . . The weather is splendid now, but yesterday it was so wet that the workmen didn't do anything all day. How much hay have you stacked? Just think, I felt greedy and had a whole field cut, and now I'm not at all pleased about it because I'm afraid my hay may rot. I ought to have waited a bit. But what's this? Why, you're in evening dress! Well, I never! Are you going to a ball, or what? — though I must say you look better. Tell me, why are you got up like that?

LOMOV [*excited*]. You see, honored Natalya Stepanovna . . . the fact is, I've made up my mind to ask you to hear me out. . . . Of course you'll be surprised and perhaps even angry, but a . . . [*Aside.*] It's awfully cold!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What's the matter? [*Pause.*] Well?

LOMOV. I shall try to be brief. You must know, honored Natalya Stepanovna, that I have long, since my childhood, in fact, had the privilege of knowing your family. My late aunt and her husband, from whom, as you know, I inherited my land, always had the greatest respect for your father and your late mother. The Lomovs and the Chubukovs have always had the most friendly, and I might almost say the most affectionate, regard for each other. And, as you know, my land is a near neighbor of yours. You will remember that my Oxen Meadows touch your birchwoods.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Excuse my interrupting you. You say, "my Oxen Meadows. . . ." But are they yours?

LOMOV. Yes, mine.



NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What are you talking about? Oxen Meadows are ours, not yours!

LOMOV. No, mine, honored Natalya Stepanovna.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Well, I never knew that before. How do you make that out?

LOMOV. How? I'm speaking of those Oxen Meadows which are wedged in between your birchwoods and the Burnt Marsh.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Yes, yes. . . . They're ours.

LOMOV. No, you're mistaken, honored Natalya Stepanovna, they're mine.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Just think, Ivan Vassilevitch! How long have they been yours?

LOMOV. How long? as long as I can remember.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Really, you won't get me to believe that!

LOMOV. But you can see from the documents, honored Natalya Stepanovna. Oxen Meadows, it's true, were once the subject of dispute, but now everybody knows that they are mine. There's nothing to argue about. You see, my aunt's grandmother gave the free use of these Meadows in perpetuity to the peasants of your father's grandfather, in return for which they were to make bricks for her. The peasants belonging to your father's grandfather had the free use of the Meadows for forty years, and had got into the habit of regarding them as their own, when it happened that. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. No, it isn't like that! Both my grandfather and great-grandfather reckoned that their land extended to Burnt Marsh — which means that Oxen Meadows were ours. I don't see what there is to argue about. It's simply silly!



LOMOV. I'll show you the documents, Natalya Stepanovna!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. No, you're simply joking, or making fun of me. . . . What a surprise! We've had the land for nearly three hundred years, and then we're suddenly told that it isn't ours! Ivan Vassilevitch, I can hardly believe my own ears. . . . These Meadows aren't worth much to me. They only come to five dessiatins,<sup>1</sup> and are worth perhaps 300 roubles,<sup>2</sup> but I can't stand unfairness. Say what you will, but I can't stand unfairness.

LOMOV. Hear me out, I implore you! The peasants of your father's grandfather, as I have already had the honor of explaining to you, used to bake bricks for my aunt's grandmother. Now my aunt's grandmother, wishing to make them a pleasant. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I can't make head or tail of all this about aunts and grandfathers and grandmothers. The Meadows are ours, and that's all.

LOMOV. Mine.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Ours! You can go on proving it for two days on end, you can go and put on fifteen dress-jackets, but I tell you they're ours, ours, ours! I don't want anything of yours and I don't want to give up anything of mine. So there!

LOMOV. Natalya Ivanovna, I don't want the Meadows, but I am acting on principle. If you like, I'll make you a present of them.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I can make you a present of them myself, because they're mine! Your behavior, Ivan Vassilevitch, is strange, to say the least! Up to this we

<sup>1</sup> 13½ acres.

<sup>2</sup> £30.



have always thought of you as a good neighbor, a friend: last year we lent you our threshing-machine, although on that account we had to put off our own threshing till November, but you behave to us as if we were gipsies. Giving me my own land, indeed! No, really, that's not at all neighborly! In my opinion, it's even impudent, if you want to know. . . .

LOMOV. Then you make out that I'm a land-grabber? Madam, never in my life have I grabbed anybody else's land, and I shan't allow anybody to accuse me of having done so. . . . [*Quickly steps to the carafe and drinks more water.*] Oxen Meadows are mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It's not true, they're ours!

LOMOV. Mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It's not true! I'll prove it! I'll send my mowers to the Meadows this very day!

LOMOV. What?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. My mowers will be there this very day!

LOMOV. I'll give it to them in the neck!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. You dare!

LOMOV. [*Clutches at his heart.*] Oxen Meadows are mine! You understand? Mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Please don't shout! You can shout yourself hoarse in your own house, but here I must ask you to restrain yourself!

LOMOV. If it wasn't, madam, for this awful, excruciating palpitation, if my whole inside wasn't upset, I'd talk to you in a different way! [*Yells.*] Oxen Meadows are mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Ours!

LOMOV. Mine!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Ours!



LOMOV. Mine!

*Enter CHUBUKOV*

CHUBUKOV [*to LOMOV*]. Darling, the Meadows are ours!

LOMOV. But, please, Stepan Stepanitch, how can they be yours? Do be a reasonable man! My aunt's grandmother gave the Meadows for the temporary and free use of your grandfather's peasants. The peasants used the land for forty years and got as accustomed to it as if it was their own, when it happened that. . . .

CHUBUKOV. Excuse me, my precious. . . . You forget just this, that the peasants didn't pay your grandmother and all that, because the Meadows were in dispute, and so on. And now everybody knows that they're ours. It means that you haven't seen the plan.

LOMOV. I'll prove to you that they're mine!

CHUBUKOV. You won't prove it, my darling.

LOMOV. I shall!

CHUBUKOV. Dear one, why yell like that? You won't prove anything by just yelling. I don't want anything of yours, and don't intend to give up what I have. Why should I! And you know, my beloved, that if you propose to go on arguing about it, I'd much sooner give up the meadows to the peasants than to you. There!

LOMOV. I don't understand! How have you the right to give away somebody else's property?

CHUBUKOV. You may take it that I know whether I have the right or not. Because, young man, I'm not used to being spoken to in that tone of voice, and so on: I, young man, am twice your age, and ask you to speak to me without agitating yourself, and all that.

LOMOV. No, you just think I'm a fool and want to have me on! You call my land yours, and then you want me



to talk to you calmly and politely! Good neighbors don't behave like that, Stepan Stepanitch! You're not a neighbor, you're a grabber!

CHUBUKOV. What's that? What did you say?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Papa, send the mowers out to the Meadows at once!

CHUBUKOV. What did you say, sir?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Oxen Meadows are ours, and I shan't give them up, shan't give them up!

LOMOV. We'll see! I'll have the matter taken to court, and then I'll show you!

CHUBUKOV. To court? You can take it to court, and all that! You can! I know you; you're just on the lookout for a chance to go to court, and all that. . . . You pettifogger! All your people were like that! All of them!

LOMOV. Never mind about my people! The Lomovs have all been honorable people, and not one has ever been tried for embezzlement, like your grandfather!

CHUBUKOV. You Lomovs have had lunacy in your family, all of you!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. All, all, all!

CHUBUKOV. Your grandfather was a drunkard, and your younger aunt, Nastasya Mihailovna, ran away with an architect, and so on . . .

LOMOV. And your mother was hump-backed. [*Clutches at his heart.*] Something pulling in my side . . . My head . . . Help! Water!

CHUBUKOV. Your father was a guzzling gambler!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. And there haven't been many backbiters to equal your aunt!

LOMOV. My left foot has gone to sleep. . . . You're an intriguer. . . . Oh, my heart! . . . And it's an open



secret that before the last elections you bri . . . I see stars. . . . Where's my hat?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It's low! It's dishonest! It's mean!

CHUBUKOV. And you're just a malicious, double-faced intriguer! Yes!

LOMOV. Here's my hat. . . . My heart! . . . Which way? Where's the door? Oh! . . . I think I'm dying. . . . My foot's quite numb. . . . [*Goes to the door.*]

CHUBUKOV [*following him*]. And don't set foot in my house again.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Take it to court! We'll see.

[LOMOV *staggers out*

CHUBUKOV. Devil take him! [*Walks about in excitement.*]

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What a rascal! What trust can one have in one's neighbors after that!

CHUBUKOV. The villain! The scarecrow!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. The monster! First he takes our land and then he has the impudence to abuse us.

CHUBUKOV. And that blind hen, yes, that turnip-ghost has the confounded cheek to make a proposal, and so on! What? A proposal!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What proposal?

CHUBUKOV. Why, he came here so as to propose to you.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. To propose? To me? Why didn't you tell me so before?

CHUBUKOV. So he dresses up in evening clothes. The stuffed sausage! The wizen-faced frump!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. To propose to me? Ah! [*Falls into an easy-chair and wails.*] Bring him back! Back! Ah! Bring him here.



CHUBUKOV. Bring whom here?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Quick, quick! I'm ill! Fetch him! [*Hysterics.*]

CHUBUKOV. What's that? What's the matter with you? [*Clutches at his head.*] Oh, unhappy man that I am! I'll shoot myself. I'll hang myself! We've done for her!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I'm dying! Fetch him!

CHUBUKOV. Tfoo! At once. Don't yell!

[*Runs out. A pause. NATALYA STEPANOVNA wails*

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What have they done to me! Fetch him back! Fetch him! [*A pause.*]

CHUBUKOV *runs in*

CHUBUKOV. He's coming, and so on, devil take him! Ouf! Talk to him yourself; I don't want to. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. [*Wails.*] Fetch him!

CHUBUKOV. [*Yells.*] He's coming, I tell you. Oh, what a burden, Lord, to be the father of a grown-up daughter! I'll cut my throat! I will, indeed! We cursed him, abused him, drove him out, and it's all you . . . you!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. No, it was you!

CHUBUKOV. I tell you it's not my fault. [*LOMOV appears at the door.*] Now you talk to him yourself.

[*Exit*

LOMOV *enters, exhausted*

LOMOV. My heart's palpitating awfully. . . . My foot's gone to sleep. There's something keeps pulling in my side. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Forgive us, Ivan Vassilevitch, we were all a little heated. . . . I remember now: Oxen Meadows really are yours.

LOMOV. My heart's beating awfully. . . . My meadows. My eyebrows are both twitching. . . .



NATALYA STEPANOVNA. The Meadows are yours, yes, yours. . . . Do sit down. . . . [*They sit.*] We were wrong. . . .

LOMOV. I did it on principle. . . . My land is worth little to me, but the principle.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Yes, the principle, just so. . . . Now let's talk of something else.

LOMOV. The more so as I have evidence. My aunt's grandmother gave the land to your father's grandfather's peasants. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Yes, yes, let that pass. . . . [*Aside.*] I wish I knew how to get him started. . . . [*Aloud.*] Are you going to start shooting soon?

LOMOV. I'm thinking of having a go at the blackcock, honored Natalya Stepanovna, after the harvest. Oh, have you heard? Just think, what a misfortune I've had! My dog Guess, whom you know, has gone lame.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What a pity! Why?

LOMOV. I don't know. . . . Must have got twisted, or bitten by some other dog. [*Sighs.*] My very best dog, to say nothing of the expense. I gave Mironov 125 roubles for him.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It was too much, Ivan Vassilevitch.

LOMOV. I think it was very cheap. He's a first-rate dog.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Papa gave 85 roubles for his Squeezer, and Squeezer is heaps better than Guess!

LOMOV. Squeezer better than Guess? What an idea! [*Laughs.*] Squeezer better than Guess!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Of course he's better! Of course, Squeezer is young, he may develop a bit, but on



points and pedigree he's better than anything that even Volchanetsky has got.

LOMOV. Excuse me, Natalya Stepanovna, but you forget that he is overshot, and an overshot always means the dog is a bad hunter!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Overshot, is he? The first time I hear it!

LOMOV. I assure you that his lower jaw is shorter than the upper.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Have you measured?

LOMOV. Yes. He's all right at following, of course, but if you want him to get hold of anything. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. In the first place, our Squeezer is a thoroughbred animal, the son of Harness and Chisels, while there's no getting at the pedigree of your dog at all. . . . He's old and as ugly as a worn-out cab-horse.

LOMOV. He is old, but I wouldn't take five Squeezers for him. Why, how can you? . . . Guess is a dog; as for Squeezer . . . you may find them under every bush almost. Twenty-five roubles would be a handsome price to pay for him.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. There's some demon of contradiction in you to-day, Ivan Vassilevitch. First you pretend that the Meadows are yours; now, that Guess is better than Squeezer. I don't like people who don't say what they mean, because you know perfectly well that Squeezer is a hundred times better than your silly Guess. Why do you want to say it isn't?

LOMOV. I see, Natalya Stepanovna, that you consider me either blind or a fool. You must realize that Squeezer is overshot!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It's not true.



LOMOV. He is!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. It's not true!

LOMOV. Why shout, madam?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Why talk rot? It's awful! It's time your Guess was shot, and you compare him with Squeezer!

LOMOV. Excuse me; I cannot continue this discussion; my heart is palpitating.

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I've noticed that those hunters argue most who know least.

LOMOV. Madam, please be silent. . . . My heart is going to pieces. . . . [*Shouts.*] Shut up!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I shan't shut up until you acknowledge that Squeezer is a hundred times better than your Guess.

LOMOV. A hundred times worse! Be hanged to your Squeezer! His head, . . . eyes, . . . shoulder. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. There's no need to hang your silly Guess; he's half dead already!

LOMOV. [*Weeps.*] Shut up! My heart's bursting!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I shan't shut up.

*Enter CHUBUKOV*

CHUBUKOV. What's the matter now?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Papa, tell us truly, which is the better dog, our Squeezer or his Guess.

LOMOV. Stepan Stepanovitch, I implore you to tell me just one thing: is your Squeezer overshot or not? Yes or no?

CHUBUKOV. And suppose he is? What does it matter? He's the best dog in the district for all that, and so on.

LOMOV. But isn't my Guess better? Really, now?

CHUBUKOV. Don't excite yourself, my precious one.



. . . Allow me. . . Your Guess certainly has his good points. . . He's pure-bred, firm on his feet, has well-sprung ribs, and all that. But, my dear man, if you want to know the truth, that dog has two defects: He's old and he's short in the muzzle.

LOMOV. Excuse me, my heart. . . Let's take the facts. . . You will remember that on the Marusinsky hunt my Guess ran neck-and-neck with the Count's dog, while your Squeezer was left a whole verst behind.

CHUBUKOV. He got left behind because the Count's whipper-in hit him with his whip.

LOMOV. And with good reason. The dogs are running after a fox, when Squeezer goes and starts worrying a sheep!

CHUBUKOV. It's not true! My dear fellow, I'm very liable to lose my temper, and so, just because of that, let's stop arguing. You started because everybody is always jealous of everybody else's dog. Yes, we're all like that! You too, sir, aren't blameless! You no sooner notice that some dog is better than your Guess than you begin with this, that . . . and the other . . . and all that . . . I remember everything!

LOMOV. I remember too!

CHUBUKOV [*teasing him*]. I remember, too. . . What do you remember?

LOMOV. My heart. . . My foot's gone to sleep. . . I can't. . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA [*teasing*]. My heart. . . What sort of hunter are you? You ought to go and lie on the kitchen oven and catch black beetles, not go after foxes! My heart!

CHUBUKOV. Yes, really, what sort of a hunter are you, anyway? You ought to sit at home with your palpitations,



and not go tracking animals. You could go hunting, but you only go to argue with people and interfere with their dogs and so on. Let's change the subject in case I lose my temper. You're not a hunter at all, anyway!

LOMOV. And are you a hunter? You only go hunting to get in with the Count and to intrigue. . . . Oh, my heart! . . . You're an intriguer!

CHUBUKOV. What? I an intriguer? [*Shouts.*] Shut up!

LOMOV. Intriguer!

CHUBUKOV. Boy! Pup!

LOMOV. Old rat! Jesuit!

CHUBUKOV. Shut up, or I'll shoot you like a partridge! You fool!

LOMOV. Everybody knows that—oh my heart!—your late wife used to beat you. . . . My feet . . . temples . . . sparks . . . I fall, I fall!

CHUBUKOV. And you're under the slipper of your housekeeper!

LOMOV. There, there, there . . . my heart's burst! My shoulder's come off. . . . Where is my shoulder? I die. [*Falls into an armchair.*] A doctor! [*Faints.*]

CHUBUKOV. Boy! Milksop! Fool! I'm sick! [*Drinks water.*] Sick!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. What sort of a hunter are you? You can't even sit on a horse! [*To her father.*] Papa, what's the matter with him? Papa! Look, papa! [*Screams.*] Ivan Vassilevitch! He's dead!

CHUBUKOV. I'm sick! . . . I can't breathe! . . . Air!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. He's dead. [*Pulls Lomov's sleeve.*] Ivan Vassilevitch! Ivan Vassilevitch! What have you done to me? He's dead. [*Falls into an armchair.*] A doctor, a doctor! [*Hysterics.*]



CHUBUKOV. Oh! . . . What is it? What's the matter?

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. [*Wails.*] He's dead . . . dead!

CHUBUKOV. Who's dead? [*Looks at LOMOV.*] So he is! My word! Water! A doctor! [*Lifts a tumbler to Lomov's mouth.*] Drink this! . . . No, he doesn't drink. . . . It means he's dead, and all that. . . . I'm the most unhappy of men! Why don't I put a bullet into my brain? Why haven't I cut my throat yet? What am I waiting for? Give me a knife! Give me a pistol! [*LOMOV moves.*] He seems to be coming round. . . . Drink some water! That's right. . . .

LOMOV. I see stars . . . mist. . . . Where am I?

CHUBUKOV. Hurry up and get married and — well, to the devil with you! She's willing! [*He puts Lomov's hand into his daughter's.*] She's willing and all that. I give you my blessing and so on. Only leave me in peace!

LOMOV [*getting up*]. Eh? What? To whom?

CHUBUKOV. She's willing! Well? Kiss and be damned to you!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. [*Wails.*] He's alive. . . . Yes, yes, I'm willing. . . .

CHUBUKOV. Kiss each other!

LOMOV. Eh? Kiss whom? [*They kiss.*] Very nice, too. Excuse me, what's it all about? Oh, now I understand . . . my heart . . . stars. . . . I'm happy. Natalya Stepanovna. . . . [*Kisses her hand.*] My foot's gone to sleep. . . .

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. I. . . . I'm happy too. . . .

CHUBUKOV. What a weight off my shoulders. . . . Ouf!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. But . . . still you will admit now that Guess is worse than Squeezer.



LOMOV. Better!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Worse!

CHUBUKOV. Well, that's a way to start your family bliss! Have some champagne!

LOMOV. He's better!

NATALYA STEPANOVNA. Worse! worse! worse!

CHUBUKOV [*trying to shout her down*]. Champagne! Champagne!

CURTAIN



## THE TWILIGHT SAINT

STARK YOUNG

## CHARACTERS

GUIDO, *the husband, a young poet*LISETTA, *his wife*PIA, *a neighbor woman*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*In the year 1215 A.D.*

*A room in Guido's house, on a hillside near Bevagna. It is a poor apartment, clumsily kept. On your left near the front is a bed; on the floor by the bed lie scattered pages of manuscript. A table littered with manuscripts and crockery stands against the back wall of the room to the right. On the right hand wall is a big fireplace with copper vessels and brass. A bench sits by the fireplace and several stools about the room. On the stone flags two sheepskins are spread.*

*Through the open door in the middle of the back wall rises the slope of a hill, green with spring and starred with flowers. A stream is visible through the grass and the drowsy sound of the water fills the air. The late yellow sunlight falls through a window over the bed like gilding and floods the hill without.*

*LISETTA lies on the bed, still, her eyes closed. PIA sits on the ingle bench, halfway in the great fireplace, shelling peas. She is a little peasant woman with a kerchief on her head and a wrinkled face as brown as a nut.*

*GUIDO sits at the table, his face to the wall, his chin on his palm.*



PIA. Guido, Guido, thou hast not spoke this hour,  
Nor read one word nor written aught. Dear Lord  
The lion on the palace at Assisi  
Sits not more still in stone! Guido, look thou!

GUIDO [*turning round without looking at her*]. Yes, old  
Pia, good neighbor.

PIA. Yes, old Pia! Guido, grieve not so much,  
Lisetta will be well before the spring  
Comes round again.

GUIDO. Yes, Lisetta will be well perhaps. God grant!

PIA. Well, what then?

GUIDO. 'Tis not only of her I think, Pia, here am I  
Shut in this house from month to month a nurse;  
Here lies she sick, this child, and may not stir;  
And I, lacking due means to hire, must serve  
The house; while my best self, my soul, my art,  
Rust. My soul is scorched with holy thirst,  
My temples throb, my veins run fire; but yet,  
For all my dim distress and vague desire,  
No word, no single song, no verse, has come —  
O Blessed God! — stifled with creature needs,  
And with necessity about my throat!

PIA. Thy corner is too hot, the glaring sun  
Is yet on the wall.

GUIDO. 'Tis not that sun that maddens me, O Pia!  
Can you not see me shrunk? Have you not heard  
That other Guido of Perugia  
How he is grown? How lately at the feast  
That Ugolino, the great cardinal  
Spread at Assisi Easter night, Guido  
Read certain of his verses and declaimed  
Pages of cursed sonnets to the guests.



PIA. Young Guido of Perugia, thy friend?

GUIDO. Yea. And when he ended, came the Duke  
Down from the dais to kiss that Guido's hand  
Humbly, and said that Poesy was king.

PIA. Madonna, kissed by the Duke!

GUIDO. And I, O God, I might have honor too  
Could I but break this prison where I drudge!

PIA. Speak low, her sleep is light. Her road is hard  
As well as thine. For all this year, since thou  
Didst bring her to Rieto here to us,  
Hath she lain on her bed, broken with pain,  
This child that is thy wife and loveth thee.

GUIDO. Aye, yes, 'tis true, she loveth me, she loveth me,  
And I love her. 'Tis worse — add grief to care,  
And Poesy fares worse.

PIA. And she is grown most pale and still of late.

GUIDO. Look, Pia, how she lieth there like death,  
That far-off patience on her face. Now, now,  
Surely I needs must make a song! And yet  
I may not; ashes and floor-sweeping clog  
My soul within me!

PIA. Nay, let thy dreams pass. Look thou, how pale!  
Dear Lord, how blue her little veins do shine!

GUIDO. Thou art most kind, good neighbor, to come  
here  
Helping our house. And it is very strange  
That when we are so kind we cannot know  
The heart also. For in my soul I hear  
A bell summoning me always —

PIA. If I should stew in milk the peas, maybe —  
Do you think the child would eat it?

GUIDO. For thy world is not my world, kind old friend.



PIA. Why do you not walk, Guido, for a while,  
I have an hour yet.

GUIDO. Then I will go, Pia. But not for long.  
I will come back soon enough to my chores, be sure;  
Mine is a short tether.

[*He goes out.* LISETTA *on the bed opens her eyes*

LISETTA. Pia!

PIA. Yes, dear child.

LISETTA. Pia, turn my pillow, I am stifled.

PIA. There! Thou hast slept well?

LISETTA. I have not slept.

PIA. Holy Virgin, thou hast not slept!

LISETTA. Pia, think you I did not know? This month  
I scarce have slept for thinking on his lot.  
I read his fighting soul. Where are his songs,  
The great renown that waited him? Down, down,  
Struck by the self-same hand that shattered me.  
I listen night on night and hear him moan  
In his sleep —

PIA. It is his love for thee, Lisetta.

LISETTA. The padre from the village hemmed and said  
That God had sent me and my sickness here  
For Guido's cross to bear, his scourge. They thought I  
slept —

PIA. Thou hast dreamed this, he loveth thee, Lisetta.

LISETTA. Yea, loveth me somewhat but glory more.  
And I would have it so. O Mother of God,  
When wilt thou send me death? O Blessed Mother, I have  
lain so still!

PIA. Beware, Lisetta, tempt not God!

LISETTA. Death is the sister of all them that weep, Pia.

PIA. Child, child, try thou to sleep.



LISSETTA. For thy sake I will try.

PIA. Aye, sleep now. I will smooth thy bed.

[PIA *begins to draw up the covers smooth. She stops suddenly to listen.*] Hist!

LISSETTA. What, good Pia?

PIA. Footsteps. Look, it is a monk.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI *comes to the door*

FRANCIS. I have not eaten food this day. Hast thou Somewhat that I may eat?

PIA. Alas, poor brother, sit thee here; there's bread And cheese and lentils, eat thy 'tis, But given in His name.

FRANCIS. I will eat then and bless thee.

PIA. He taketh but a crust!

FRANCIS. It is enough. He that hath eaten long The bread of the heart hath little hunger in him.

PIA. Sit thou and rest, poor soul.

FRANCIS. Nay, I must go on. My daughter, child, Thou sleepest not for all thy lowered lids. Tears quiver on thy lashes, hast thou pain?

LISSETTA. The tears of women even in dreams may fall, Good brother. Will thou not bide?

FRANCIS. I must fare on.

LISSETTA. Aye, aye, the world lies open to thy hand, But unto me this twelvemonth is a death. The flesh is dead, and dying lies my soul, Shrunk like a flower in my fevered hand.

FRANCIS. [*He goes over and stands beside the bed.*] My dear.

LISSETTA. I may not see the stars rise on the hills, Nor tend the flocks at even, nor rise to do Aught of the small sweet round of duties owed



To him I love; but lie a burden to him,  
Calling on death who heareth not.

FRANCIS. My life hath given me words for thee to hear.

LISETTA. Surely thy life is peace.

FRANCIS. There is a life larger than life, that dwells  
Invisible from all; whose lack alone  
Is death. There in thy soul the stars may rise,  
And at even the gentle thoughts return  
To flock the quiet pastures of the mind;  
And in the large heart love is all thou owest  
For service unto God and thy Beloved.

LISETTA. Little Brother!

FRANCIS. May you have God's peace, dear friends.  
Farewell.

*He goes out. PIA stands a moment wiping her eyes, then returns to shelling the peas. There is a silence for a while.*

PIA. Why dost thou look so long upon the door?

LISETTA. Pia, the spring smiles on the tender grass,  
Surely the sun is brighter where he stood.

PIA. 'Tis a glaring sun for twilight.

LISETTA. Pia, 'twill be the gentlest of all eves.  
Surely God sent the brother for my need,  
To give His peace.

PIA. Aye, and my old heart ripens at his words  
Like apples in the sun. 'Tis a sweet monk.

LISETTA. Who is he, think you?

PIA. One of the Little Poor Men, by his brown.  
They are too thin, these brothers, and do lack  
Stomach for life. [*She returns to the peas.*] Mark, oh, 'tis  
merry now  
To see the little beggars from their pods



Popping like schoolboys from their shoes in spring!  
The season hath been so fine and dry this year  
My peas are smaller and must have more work.  
Well, well, labor is good, and things made scarce  
Are better loved.

LISETTA. Pia, thou art a good woman.

PIA. Child, do not make me cry. 'Tis thy pure heart  
Deceives thee. Stubborn I am and full of sloth,  
And a wicked old thing.

LISETTA. I would not grieve thee. Pia, 'twas my love  
That sees thy goodness better than thyself.

PIA. [*Begins to sing in her sweet, old, cracked voice, as she  
stirs the pot.*]

Firefly, firefly, come from the shadows,  
Twilight is falling over the meadows,  
Burn, little garden lamps, flicker and shimmer,  
Shine, little meadow stars, twinkle and glimmer,  
Firefly, firefly, shine, shine!

LISETTA. Pia.

PIA. Yes.

LISETTA. Pia, come near me here. [*PIA kneels by the  
bed.*]

Can you not see

How much I love? If I could only speak  
To him or he to me, Guido, my love!

PIA. Surely he is beside thee often.

LISETTA. His hand is near, but not his heart.

PIA. Nay, child, 'tis Guido's way. He speaks but little.  
When I speak to him look what he says,  
"Yes, good Pia," 'tis not much.

LISETTA. Aye, tell me not. On winter nights I lay  
Hearing the tree limbs rattle there like hail,



And from the corner eaves the dropping rain  
 Like big dogs lapping all about — and he  
 Spoke not to me. He sat beside his taper  
 But never a line wrote down. Once I had words  
 Bright dreams, that shone through him, the same fire shone  
 Through both, his songs were mine!

PIA. Yes, thine — rest thee, rest thee!

LISSETTA. But more his, Pia, more his!

PIA. Aye, his. Wilt thou not eat the broth?

LISSETTA. Not now, good Pia, 'tis not for food I die.  
 'Tis not for food.

PIA. Yet thou must eat.

LISSETTA. Wilt thou not read one song of these to me?

PIA. Close then thine eyes and rest.

LISSETTA *closes her eyes. A shepherd's pipe far-off and faint begins to play; from this on to the end of the play you can hear the shepherd's pipe. PIA takes up at random a sheet of the manuscripts. She sighs a great sigh, and begins to mimic Lisetta's voice.*

#### THE BALLAD OF THE RUNNING WATER

O Music locked amid the stones

Beside the — amid — the

LISSETTA. Read on — and thou hast told me day by day  
 Thou couldst not read.

PIA. I read from hearing thee from day to day  
 Repeat the verses.

LISSETTA. Fie! Give them to me here.

[*She takes the paper and holds it in her hands on her breast, and reads without looking at it.*]

O Music locked amid the stones

My love hath spoken like to thee,



Pia, think you — Pia, do you not hear  
The mowers and the reapers in the fields  
Singing the evening song, and the twilight pipes?  
The twilight is the hour when hearts break!  
How many lonely twilights will there be  
Ere God will spare me?

PIA [*kneeling*]. Hush, child, hush, darling!

[LISSETTA *turns her face to the window by the bed*. PIA *strokes her hand and sings softly*.]

Firefly, firefly, come from the shadows —

There! — he is coming now, I hear his steps  
Upon the gravel road. Goodnight, sweet child,  
I'll get me home.

LISSETTA. Pia, goodnight once more.

PIA *slips away*. GUIDO *enters softly*. *The twilight is gone and the moon shines through the window over the bed. The hill outside is bright with moonlight.*

GUIDO. Asleep, Lisetta?

LISSETTA. Guido. Ah, I have need of naught, Guido.  
Thou needst not leave yet the pleasant air.

GUIDO. Lisetta, my love, I have been long from thee.

LISSETTA. Let not that trouble thee, my needs are few,  
And Pia is most kind.

GUIDO. So little I may do.

LISSETTA. Thou hast already served to weariness.

*He kneels beside her bed.*

GUIDO. My love, I have been long from thee, but now  
I will not leave thee any more. Oh, God,  
Let these kisses tell my heart to her.



LISETTA. Guido, my love, perhaps I dream of thee!  
Perhaps God sends a dream to solace me.

GUIDO. Along the stream I went and where it crossed  
Bevagna road — where the chestnut grows, thou knowest —  
Lisetta, I saw him.

LISETTA. Yes, yes, I know, whom sawest thou?

GUIDO. The brother, Francis of Assisi.

LISETTA. Guido, sawest thou him?

GUIDO. Aye, him. There had he stopped to rest, being  
spent;

And round him came the birds, beating their wings  
Upon his cloak and lighting on his arm.

I saw him smile on them and heard him speak!

“My brother birds, little brothers, ye should love God  
Who gave you your wings and your bright songs and spread  
The soft air for you.” He stroked their necks  
And blessed them. And then I saw his eyes.  
“Father,” I cried, “speak thou to me, I faint  
Beside my way!”

LISETTA. Aye, and he said? Guido, what said he?

GUIDO. “Thou art as one that lieth at the gate  
Of Paradise and entereth not. For God  
Hath given thee thy soul for its own life,  
And not for glory among men.”

LISETTA. Guido!

GUIDO. Lisetta, from his kind eyes I drank, and knew  
How God had magnified my soul through him,  
And sent me peace. And I returned to thee;  
For here in thee have I my glory.

LISETTA. Guido, the old spring comes back again. And  
now

I may speak. Guido, look through my window vines there



Where the stars rise. O Love, I have not slept  
For lacking thee. And often have I seen  
The moonlight lie like sleep upon the hill,  
And in the garden of the sky the moon  
Drift like a blown rose, Guido, and yet  
I might not speak.

GUIDO. Thou art my saint and shrine!

LISSETTA. Now shall my dream become thy song again,  
And the long twilight be more sweet, Guido!

GUIDO. I pray thee rest thee now and sleep. Good-  
night.

My full heart breaks in song; and I will sit  
Hearing the blessed saints within my soul,  
And will not stir from thee lest thou shouldst wake  
When I might not be near to serve thy need.

*The shepherd pipe far-off and faint is heard playing.*

CURTAIN



## MY LADY'S ROSE

*A Selection from "My Lady's Dress"*

EDWARD KNOBLOCK

## CHARACTERS

ANNIE

MRS. MOSS

LIZA

JACK

*A dingy, dark room in the East End. Along the wall a row of hooks with some clothes and a washstand with tin basin, etc. Along the wall, to the left, a kitchen dresser with china. To the right the hearth. In the center a large table with an oil lamp shaded with a green shade. On the table countless pieces of colored cloth, bits of wire, etc., for making artificial flowers. The lamp is lighted. Behind the table, busily at work on her artificial flowers, sits ANNIE. She is a pale, frail girl of eighteen with an eager face crowned by an immense amount of beautiful red-gold hair. This hangs down behind so as to hide her deformity, for she is a hunchback. She wears a white rather soiled apron over a plain dark bodice. Nothing else can be seen of her, as all through the scene she never moves from her chair behind the table. By the hearth, MRS. MOSS, a stout, Jewish woman. She is on her knees poking the fire — which cannot be seen. But the clatter of the poker on the iron and the glow show her operation to be effective. Everybody in the scene talks cockney, of course.*



MRS. MOSS. There, dearie! There! The fire's all right again! Shall I put the kettle on?

ANNIE *never stops working all through the scene except when she takes her tea.*

ANNIE. Yas! There's a dear!

MRS. MOSS. Per'aps you'll 'ave yer tea before Liza comes 'ome?

ANNIE. What d'you take me for? Not wait for Liza?

MRS. MOSS [*taking the kettle and putting it on the hearth*]. But it's so cold in 'ere to-day, dearie. You must be froze.

ANNIE. No more'n usual.

MRS. MOSS. Will you get them flowers done in time?

ANNIE. They take a deal of doin', these 'ere fancy velvet roses.

MRS. MOSS. But they're wonderful when they do get done. Got a rare knack with them fingers o' yours.

ANNIE. It's a 'abit — that's what it is. Just a 'abit! 'Aven't I been at it more years'n I like to think of?

MRS. MOSS. 'Ow old are you exactly, Annie?

ANNIE. What makes you ask?

MRS. MOSS. I was only just wonderin'.

ANNIE [*defiantly*]. I'm eighteen come Christmas, if you must know. And I'm not ashamed of it, neither.

MRS. MOSS. Eighteen! As much as that?

ANNIE. Oh, you think 'cause my 'air's down, don't you? Well, I can't a-bear to put it up — that's why.

MRS. MOSS [*conciliatory*]. 'Course not. You'd be 'ayin' 'eadaches all day long, wouldn't you? You've got such loads and loads of it! And such a color, too! My 'usband always says, says Sam: "There's a fortune in that girl's 'air." And 'e ought ter know — bein' as he is in 'air 'imself and a first-class barber.



ANNIE. A fortune? Two or three quids per'aps?

MRS. MOSS. More like ten, I should say.

ANNIE. Ten quid? Garn!

MRS. MOSS. 'Struth. We could all make a bit out of this 'air o' yours if you'd only sell it. I've never seen the likes of it and on such a little body, too. Strikes me all your strength's gone into your 'air. [*She fingers it.*]

ANNIE. The nurses in the 'Ome, they used to say the same sort o' thing. And me only a bit of kid then. It's when they tried to straighten me out and get me legs to work. You know, six years ago. D'you know what they called me? "Goldilocks."

MRS. MOSS. Goldilocks. Oh, did they?

ANNIE. Yas. And there was one of 'em — Nurse Porter she was — she used to read me sometimes when I couldn't sleep; a book about fairy tales — one in particular about a queen or a princess it was — I forget. And they locked 'er up in a tower, like the wicked witch did. She 'ad 'air just like mine only longer; 'cause it was in a tale this, you see. And she used to sit by the window and let it down. And the prince 'e come a-ridin' along one fine day. And 'e couldn't get up to 'er. So 'e just climb up 'er 'air.

MRS. MOSS. Such rubbish I never did 'ear! Climb up 'er 'air indeed. I'd like to see anybody a climbin' up my 'air. I'd soon give 'em the chuck.

ANNIE. Ain't I tellin' yer it was only a tale?

MRS. MOSS. Yes, and nice goin's-on, too. You don't catch any of our royal ladies a-'angin' their 'eads out of Buckingham Palace with their 'air all in a mess. People in tales never 'ave no self-respec'. I don't 'old with no tales.



ANNIE. I dunno. I think it sounds kind o' pretty some'ow. Any'ow it done so in the 'Ome, the way Nurse Porter used to read it.

MRS. MOSS [*doubtfully*]. Per'aps.

ANNIE. It did reely. [*After a pause, with a sigh.*] Well, any'ow — one thing I do know, fairy tales or no fairy tales — there'll never be no prince for me. No, nor any other bloke for that matter. [*Tentatively, with a quick glance.*] What do you think, Mrs. Moss?

MRS. MOSS. You never know, Annie. There might.

ANNIE [*eagerly*]. D'you think so, Mrs. Moss? Honest? With this [*pointing to her back*] — this back o' mine?

MRS. MOSS [*in a kindly manner*]. Oh, it don't show. It don't indeed, dearie.

ANNIE. O' course it don't show much, now I 'ave my 'air down. But I can't go on a-keepin' it down forever.

MRS. MOSS. Why not?

ANNIE. No. Not when once Liza gets married. I'll 'ave to put it up after next week. Everybody in the street knows she's younger'n me. I can't go on like this after she's married. They'd laugh at me.

MRS. MOSS. Let 'em laugh. What d'you care?

ANNIE. I can't 'elp it. I do care. You see they come round 'ere most of 'em, once in a while. They want to touch me back. It brings 'em luck they say.

*To the right the door is heard to open and slam. LIZA enters, a typical cockney factory girl of sixteen, healthy, raw-boned, with a dirty face, tousled hair, and a soiled factory apron and old hat.*

LIZA. 'Ello, Annie! 'Ow's life been treatin' you since this mornin'. Awright?



ANNIE [*brightening*]. Oh, I'm awright, Liza.

LIZA [*waving her hat at MRS. MOSS*]. 'Ello, Mrs. Moss! [*Doing a step*]. "You made me love you."

MRS. MOSS. You seem in pretty grand spirits, me lady, don't you?

LIZA. Never say die, Mrs. Moss. Jack and me's off to the Brit first 'ouse to-night. Got a couple o' passes from a pal what's got a sister as does a turn with performin' guinea pigs.

ANNIE. Oh, Liza — you can't go to-night!

LIZA. What's wrong?

ANNIE. These 'ere roses o' mine. We promised to deliver 'em by eight to-night.

LIZA. Lor' lumme! If I ain't gone and clean forgot these 'ere blasted roses of yours. And Jack a-comin' 'ere for 'is tea any minute now.

ANNIE. You've ast 'im to tea?

LIZA. Yus. Before we goes to the show. Met 'im at the corner. He's just gone 'ome to tidy up like.

ANNIE. But they've got to have them roses, Liza. They're workin' overtime to get the dresses out for to-morrow's show. You remember what they told you. There'll be no pay if —

LIZA [*annoyed — taking off her apron savagely*]. Yus! Yus! I remember! The blighters! Why cawn't they come and fetch 'em theirselves, eh? 'Tain't enough for me to 'ave to stand all day over a stinkin' stew in a pickle factory! 'Ave to go and traipse all night to the West End into the bargain! A bleedin' shame I calls it.

MRS. MOSS. I tell you what, Liza! My Sam's a-going West when 'e comes 'ome to-night. 'E's got to see a big 'air-dressing chap about a new job. 'E can deliver 'em



for you, if you like — that is — if you'll pay the bus fare o' course.

LIZA. I'll pay the bus one way.

MRS. MOSS. You'd have to pay it both ways if you went yourself.

LIZA. So would 'e.

MRS. MOSS. Just as you please. Take it or leave it. I only meant to oblige.

*She goes to the door.*

LIZA. Oh, very well, I'll pay both ways — this once.

MRS. MOSS. Four pence?

LIZA. Four pence.

MRS. MOSS [*to ANNIE*]. Just sing out when you're ready, Annie, and I'll come across the landin' and fetch the box.

*[She goes off right]*

ANNIE. 'Right.

LIZA [*clattering about with the tea things*]. She'd squeeze money out of a dead rat, she would. Four pence for his fares! And three pence a day for looken' after you, while I'm a-sweatin' at the factory! And two pence 'ere and five pence there! Gawd! 'Ow is it all goin' to end?

ANNIE. But I'm a-payin' for it out of my own makings!

LIZA. Yus. But you don't pay me for goin' West twice a week and more. What's goin' to 'appen once I'm married and 'ave to get Jack's tea o' nights? Who's goin' to take your bloomin' flowers then — eh? [*She starts clearing a corner of the table for tea — pushing ANNIE'S things about rather roughly.*] Answer me that, will yer?

ANNIE. Look art! Don't go messin' them petals abart, Liza!



LIZA. Oh, you and your petals! [*She gives the things another shove.*] 'Selp me Gawd if I'm not fair sick of the sight of 'em.

ANNIE. Liza!

LIZA. Well, why don't you go live at the 'Ome, if you've got to be waited on 'and and foot, and 'ave to 'ave a table size of an 'ouse, that cawn't be touched for fear of upsettin' a few frowzy old petals.

ANNIE [*after a pause*]. You don't mean it — about the 'Ome, Liza, do you?

LIZA. I do mean it. This cawn't go on after we get married. Jack — 'e won't put up with it. Why don't you go back to the 'Ome? They offered to take you again. More'n once, they did.

ANNIE. Yas. And why did I leave it, Liza? 'Cause mother died and you was alone in the world. That's why I left. And now that you're agoin' to get married — now you want to kick me out!

LIZA. Kick you art! Who's said anythin' about kickin'? You know you was 'appy at the 'Ome.

ANNIE. Oh, I was 'appy enough, I know. But it ain't the same as bein' with you, Liza! [*She cries.*] It ain't nothink like the same.

LIZA [*kindly*]. There! There! Don't you begin a-cryin' now, Annie. I don't mean a word o' what I says. There! There!

ANNIE [*whimpering*]. Yes — but ——

LIZA. Oh, for the love o' 'eaven stop your sulks! It's all over, d'you 'ear? Wipe your face; and we'll say no more abart it. [*She slams the teacups and the bread plate on the table. At the same moment there is a "rat-a-tat-tat" at the door.*]



LIZA. There 'e is now! [*Calling out.*] Come on in!  
*She fetches the teapot.*

JACK *enters, the typical jolly East End young workman.*  
*His appearance is poor but neat, as he has "cleaned up"*  
*and put on his best bright muffler. From under his little*  
*cap rolls an immense carefully brushed curl.*

JACK. Whatto girls! Liza! Come kiss me.

LIZA. Oh, garn! Saucy!

JACK. You won't, won't cher? [*He grabs her and gives*  
*her a good hug and kiss.*]

LIZA. Look 'ere, you'll be makin' me spill the tea.

JACK [*pulling her about*]. Tea be blowed, my beauty.

LIZA. Beauty yourself!

JACK. You ain't the first girl to call me that. [*He*  
*winks violently at ANNIE.*] What do you say, Annie?

LIZA [*annoyed*]. Oh, chuck it! Chuck it! Sit down  
and take your tea or we'll never get to the Brit. I've  
got to change me bodice, too — you've made yourself so  
grand.

JACK [*drawing up a chair to the table and sitting down*]. I  
likes to give folks a treat when I goes out. [*To ANNIE.*]  
Well, and 'ow's our little pet to-night?

ANNIE [*who has quite recovered, putting aside her work*].  
Oh, I'm all right.

LIZA [*handing a cup to ANNIE*]. Ain't much of a tea.  
Thought of getting some dabs. And then I says to myself.  
"There ain't much sense in splashin' about the 'oof. We  
ain't got none too much for the weddin' as it is."

JACK. No. It's that strike what done it. If it 'adn't  
been for that, we might 'ave 'ad a regular slap-up weddin',  
you and me. [*He drinks his tea disconsolately.*]



LIZA. Never you mind, Jack. I don't give a blow.  
*She sits down.*

JACK. Oh, yes, you do. And what's wuss I do, too, Liza. There ain't a bloke in the street what ain't 'ad 'is weddin' right and proper like. And they've always give me as much to drink as I could 'old — and more! And 'ere now, when it's my turn — blimy — what can I do for 'em? Not a blasted thing.

LIZA. We'll 'ave three pound between us, Jack, come next Saturday.

JACK. Three pound? And what's three pound! At Dick Facer's weddin' we finished off nine quid o' the wet, and only twenty-two of us. All beer, no spirits, mind ye — nothink but beer. Three pound! Lord love a duck! It makes me fair sick to think of it, it does. Three pound!

LIZA. You don't think of puttin' it off again, do you?

JACK. Put it off? What's the use? I might go savin' up as I did this time. And there'd be another one of them 'ere bloody strikes. And then where'd we be? No, I don't want no puttin' off. No more do you, Liza, do you?

LIZA. No, I don't. [*She rises and punches him affectionately in the chest.*] You go on with your supper. I'm going to wash up a bit. [*She crosses to the washstand and starts undoing her bodice behind, her back to the audience, revealing a terrible pair of stays beneath.*]

JACK. I don't dare show my mug in the street no more. 'Struth! I can't look a single pal o' mine in the eye; a three pound weddin'.

ANNIE [*gently*]. It's crool, Jack. Downright crool! Wish I could 'elp you. Only, you see business ain't been —

LIZA [*from the washstand*]. Annie, where's the comb?



ANNIE. I broke it. This morning I broke it acombining of my 'air.

LIZA. That makes the second this month!

ANNIE. I cawn't 'elp it. My 'air, you see — 's —

LIZA. Oh, you and your everlastin' 'air! I'll 'ave to get you a cast-iron rake next! [*Goes off to the right, apparently opening a door, is heard to shout.*] Mrs. Moss! Mrs. Moss! Got a comb? Yus, a comb. 'Old on! I'll come acrost to you. [*She reappears, takes her better bodice off a hook and a little shiny hat.*] Charge me a fiver for that, she will. You wait and see. [*She goes off to the right. There is a slight pause. ANNIE evidently is embarrassed in JACK'S presence. She finishes her tea and puts the cup aside; then starts in working again.*]

ANNIE. 'Elp yourself if you want any more.

JACK. Right ho! [*He takes out his ha'penny paper and looks over the sporting page, quite forgetting Annie's existence.*] Flying Fish? Suppose I put half a dollar on Flying Fish to-morrer?

ANNIE. 'Ave you got much luck bettin' on the 'osses?

JACK. No. Nor never did.

ANNIE. Then why do you bet? [*JACK reads, not hearing her.*] Why d'you bet, Jack? [*JACK grunts an "Eh?" but goes on reading. ANNIE works in silence after a disgusted glance at JACK.*]

JACK [*looking up*]. D'you say anythink? —

ANNIE [*pointedly*]. No. Nothink.

JACK. Oh! Thought you did. [*He watches her work.*] Them's very pretty, them roses.

ANNIE [*pleased*]. Like 'em?

JACK. Yus. You do work quick.

ANNIE. Got to. Got to get 'em done. Mr. Moss is



takin' 'em for me, seein' as Liza's off with you for the evenin'.

JACK [*taking out his pipe*]. Liza takes 'em most times, don't she?

ANNIE. Yas. She does. [*A slight pause while he lights his pipe.*]

ANNIE. Jack!

JACK [*puffing at his pipe*]. Um?

ANNIE. When you're married, you won't mind Liza takin' 'em — my flowers.

JACK. Not when it don't interfere.

ANNIE. But it might — might 'ave to interfere — sometimes.

JACK. Then she cawn't take 'em. I told 'er so straight the other day.

ANNIE. Oh, she's bin a-talkin' to you abart it?

JACK. Yus. When she talked about you goin' back to the 'Ome.

ANNIE. Oh, she's been talkin' about me going back to the 'Ome, 'as she?

JACK. She thinks you'd be more comfortable like at the 'Ome.

ANNIE. Comfortable! Comfortable! O' course I'd be more comfortable, only — [*After a pause.*] Jack — will you — will you tell me somethink?

JACK. Well?

ANNIE. No. But promise first you'll tell me straight — will you?

JACK. Tell you straight — what?

ANNIE. Do you — do you think there's any chance for me?

JACK. Chance?



ANNIE. I mean — you know — chance like — like you and Liza?

JACK [*amazed*]. Oh. You mean — get married? You?

ANNIE. Yas. D'you think some feller might come along and care for me? Some pal o' yours per'aps. They come up sometimes you know to touch me for luck. Do you?

JACK [*A smile of ridicule comes to his face. He sees Annie's anxious eyes and puts his hand over his mouth, coughing awkwardly.*] Well — er-er —

ANNIE. You're a-laughin'!

JACK. No, no, Annie. 'S'elp me Bob I ain't.

ANNIE. Well? [JACK *looks at her bewildered, not knowing what to say.*]

ANNIE [*realizing what he thinks*]. You don't — I thought per'aps me 'air. And me face ain't so bad, is it, Jack?

JACK. No. Your face ain't bad at all.

ANNIE. It's the rest —?

JACK. Well, if you must know —

ANNIE. Yes. I want to know —

JACK. Well! It is the rest.

ANNIE [*wearily*]. I thought so.

JACK [*embarrassed, kindly*]. Well, you see it's like this. A man's got to 'ave a wife that can be on the 'op, don't 'e? There's a deal to do; cookin' and washin' and all that. A pretty face and a mop of 'air, they don't count for much in the long run, you see.

ANNIE. O' course, I see. There'll never be nobody for me; that's what you mean?

JACK. No. I don't suppose so, Annie.

ANNIE [*desperately*]. Jack! [*After a pause.*] You won't tell Liza about what I've arst you, will yer?



JACK [*surprised*]. For why?

ANNIE. I dunno — You won't? There she is, now. Promise?

JACK. If you ain't a queer old-fashion' lot!

ANNIE [*pleading*]. Jack?

JACK. Awright. Awright. Don't you worry yourself.

LIZA *reënters in her best bodice and hat, dressed to go out*

JACK [*jumping up, rather relieved*]. We'll be late, old stick-in-the-mud.

LIZA. Well — who's a-dawdlin'? Me or you?

JACK [*taking her arm affectionately to give her a rough hug*]. Oh, you —

LIZA. Now then! Stow it! Stow it! Goo'-night, Annie.

ANNIE. Don't spend all the cash. Leave a bit for nex' week.

JACK. For the won'erful three pound weddin' — eh? Come along! Let's 'op it! [*He turns quickly, grabs LIZA by the chin and kisses her.*] Got you that time!

[*He hurries off the right*

LIZA [*immensely pleased*]. Garn, yer sloppy date!

[*She follows him quickly*

ANNIE *sits a moment looking after them, then sighs. She strokes her hair, then stops as if coming to a sudden decision.*

ANNIE [*calling out*]. Mrs. Moss! Mrs. Moss!

MRS. MOSS'S VOICE [*in the distance*]. Yes, dearie!

ANNIE [*calling out*]. Come over 'ere a minute, will yer?

MRS. MOSS'S VOICE. Awright, dearie! I'm comin'.

MRS. MOSS [*entering*]. Well, dearie — what is it?



ANNIE. It's — What did you say your husband could get for my 'air? Ten quid?

MRS. MOSS. Per'aps more, per'aps less. Why?

ANNIE. Enough to give Liza a slap-up weddin'?

MRS. MOSS. Lord 'a' mercy! You ain't agoin' to cut it off to give them a weddin'?

ANNIE. Why not? 'Twon't be of much use to me once I'm back in the 'Ome.

MRS. MOSS. You're going back to the 'Ome?

ANNIE. Yas. There's nothink else for the likes o' me. Just makin' flowers, that's all. So — [*She hands her the scissors.*]

MRS. MOSS. You mean it? [*Taking hold of her hair.*]

ANNIE. Yas. Go on! Cut 'em orf! [*Murmuring.*] There'll never be no prince for me.

MRS. MOSS [*engrossed in dividing the tresses*]. What d'you say?

ANNIE. Oh, nothink.

MRS. MOSS *cuts into the hair*. ANNIE *closes her eyes, wincing at the sound. The unfinished flower trembles on its wire stalk in her hand.*

CURTAIN



## THE KNAVE OF HEARTS

LOUISE SAUNDERS

CHARACTERS

THE MANAGER

BLUE HOSE

YELLOW HOSE

1ST HERALD

2D HERALD

POMPDEBILE THE EIGHTH, *King of Hearts*

THE CHANCELLOR

THE KNAVE OF HEARTS

URSULA

THE LADY VIOLETTA

*Six Little PAGES*

THE MANAGER *appears before the curtain in doublet and hose. He carries a cap with a long, red feather.*

THE MANAGER [*bowing deeply*]. Ladies and gentlemen, you are about to hear the truth of an old legend that has persisted wrongly through the ages, the truth that, until now, has been hid behind the embroidered curtain of a rhyme, about the Knave of Hearts, who was no knave but a very hero indeed. The truth, you will agree with me, gentlemen and most honored ladies, is rare! It is only the quiet, unimpassioned things of nature that seem what they are. Clouds rolled in massy radiance against the blue, pines shadowed deep and darkly green, mirrored in still waters, the contemplative mystery of the hills — these things which exist, absorbed but in their own existence — these are the perfect chalices of truth.



But we, gentlemen and thrice-honored ladies, flounder about in a tangled net of prejudice, of intrigue. We are blinded by conventions, we are crushed by misunderstanding, we are distracted by violence, we are deceived by hypocrisy, until only too often villains receive the rewards of nobility and the truly great-hearted are suspected, distrusted and maligned.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, for the sake of justice and also, I dare to hope, for your approval, I have taken my puppets down from their dusty shelves. I have polished their faces, brushed their clothes, and strung them on wires, so that they may enact for you this history.

*He parts the curtains, revealing two PASTRY COOKS in white caps and aprons leaning over in stiff profile, their wooden spoons pointing rigidly to the ceiling. They are in one of the kitchens of POMPDEBILE THE EIGHTH, King of Hearts. It is a pleasant kitchen, with a row of little windows and a huge stove.*

THE MANAGER. You see here, ladies and gentlemen, two pastry cooks belonging to the royal household of Pompdebile the Eighth — Blue Hose and Yellow Hose by name. At a signal from me they will spring to action, and as they have been made with astonishing cleverness, they will bear every semblance of life. Happily, however, you need have no fear that, should they please you, the exulting wine of your appreciation may go to their heads — their heads be but things of wire and wood; and happily, too, as they are but wood and wire, they will be spared the shame and humiliation that would otherwise be theirs should they fail to meet with your approval.



The play, most honored ladies and gentlemen, will now begin.

*He claps his hands. Instantly the two PASTRY COOKS come to life. THE MANAGER bows himself off the stage.*

BLUE HOSE. Is everything ready for this great event?

YELLOW HOSE. Everything. The fire blazing in the stove, the Pages, dressed in their best, waiting in the pantry with their various jars full of the finest butter, the sweetest sugar, the hottest pepper, the richest milk, the —

BLUE HOSE. Yes, yes, no doubt. [*Thoughtfully.*] It is a great responsibility, this that they have put on our shoulders.

YELLOW HOSE. Ah, yes. I have never felt more important.

BLUE HOSE. Nor I more uncomfortable.

YELLOW HOSE. Even on the day, or rather the night, when I awoke and found myself famous — I refer to the time when I laid before an astonished world my creation, “Humming birds’ hearts soufflé, au vin blanc” — I did not feel more important. It is a pleasing sensation!

BLUE HOSE. I like it not at all. It makes me dizzy, this eminence on which they have placed us. The Lady Violetta is slim and fair. She does not, in my opinion, look like the kind of person who is capable of making good pastry. I have discovered through long experience that it is the heaviest women who make the lightest pastry, and vice versa. Well, then, suppose that she does not pass this examination — suppose that her pastry is lumpy, white like the skin of a boiled fowl.

YELLOW HOSE. Then according to the law of the Kingdom of Hearts, we must condemn it, and the Lady Violetta



cannot become the bride of Pompdebile. Back to her native land she will be sent, riding a mule.

BLUE HOSE. And she is so pretty, so exquisite! What a law! What an outrageous law!

YELLOW HOSE. Outrageous law! How dare you! There is nothing so necessary to the welfare of the nation as our art. Good cooks make good tempers, don't they? Must not the queen set an example for the other women to follow? Did not our fathers and our grandfathers before us judge the dishes of the previous Queens of Hearts?

BLUE HOSE. I wish I were mixing the rolls for tomorrow's breakfast.

YELLOW HOSE. Bah! You are fit for nothing else. The affairs of state are beyond you.

*Distant sound of trumpets.*

BLUE HOSE [*nervously*]. What's that?

YELLOW HOSE. The King is approaching! The ceremonies are about to commence!

BLUE HOSE. Is everything ready?

YELLOW HOSE. I told you that everything was ready. Stand still; you are as white as a stalk of celery.

BLUE HOSE [*counting on his fingers*]. Apples, lemons, peaches, jam — Jam! Did you forget jam?

YELLOW HOSE. Zounds, I did!

BLUE HOSE [*wailing*]. We are lost!

YELLOW HOSE. She may not call for it.

*Both stand very erect and make a desperate effort to appear calm.*

BLUE HOSE [*very nervous*]. Which door? Which door?

YELLOW HOSE. The big one, idiot. Be still!



*The sound of trumpets increases, and cries of "Make way for the King." Two HERALDS come in and stand on either side of the door. The KING OF HEARTS enters. POMPDEBILE is in full regalia. After him comes the CHANCELLOR, an old man with a short, white beard. The KING strides in. The KNAVE walks behind him slowly. He has a sharp, pale face.*

POMPDEBILE [*impressively*]. Lords and ladies of the court, this is an important moment in the history of our reign. The Lady Violetta, whom you love and respect — that is, I mean to say, whom the ladies love and the lords — er — respect, is about to prove whether or not she be fitted to hold the exalted position of Queen of Hearts, according to the law, made a thousand years ago by Pompdebile the Great, and steadily followed ever since. She will prepare with her own delicate, white hands a dish of pastry. This will be judged by the two finest pastry cooks in the land. [BLUE HOSE and YELLOW HOSE *bow deeply*.] If their verdict be favorable, she shall ride through the streets of the city on a white palfrey, garlanded with flowers. She will be crowned, the populace will cheer her, and she will reign by our side, attending to the domestic affairs of the realm, while we give our time to weightier matters. This of course you all understand is a time of great anxiety for the Lady Violetta. She will appear worried — (*To CHANCELLOR.*) The palfrey is in readiness, we suppose.

CHANCELLOR. It is, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Garlanded with flowers?

CHANCELLOR. With roses, Your Majesty.

KNAVE [*bowing*]. The Lady Violetta prefers violets, Your Majesty.



POMPDEBILE. Let there be a few violets put in with the roses — er — We are ready for the ceremony to commence. We confess to a slight nervousness unbecoming to one of our station. The Lady Violetta, though trying at times, we have found — er — shall we say — er — satisfying?

KNAVE [*bowing*]. Intoxicating, Your Majesty?

CHANCELLOR [*shortly*]. His Majesty means nothing of the sort.

POMPDEBILE. No, of course not — er — The mule — Is that — did you —?

CHANCELLOR [*in a grieved tone*]. This is hardly necessary. Have I ever neglected or forgotten any of your commands, Your Majesty?

POMPDEBILE. You have, often. However, don't be insulted. It takes a great deal of our time and it is most uninteresting.

CHANCELLOR [*indignantly*]. I resign, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Your thirty-seventh resignation will be accepted to-morrow. Just now it is our wish to begin at once. The anxiety that no doubt gathered in the breast of each of the seven successive Pompdebiles before us seems to have concentrated in ours. Already the people are clamoring at the gates of the palace to know the decision. Begin. Let the Pages be summoned.

KNAVE [*bowing*]. Beg pardon, Your Majesty; before summoning the Pages, should not the Lady Violetta be here?

POMPDEBILE. She should, and is, we presume, on the other side of that door — waiting breathlessly.

*The KNAVE quietly opens the door and closes it.*

KNAVE [*bowing*]. She is not, Your Majesty, on the other side of that door waiting breathlessly. In fact, to speak plainly, she is not on the other side of that door at all.



POMPDEBILE. Can that be true? Where are her ladies?

KNAVE. They are all there, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Summon one of them.

[*The KNAVE goes out, shutting the door. He returns, following URSULA, who, very much frightened, throws herself at the King's feet.*

POMPDEBILE. Where is your mistress?

URSULA. She has gone, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Gone! Where has she gone?

URSULA. I do not know, Your Majesty. She was with us a while ago, waiting there, as you commanded.

POMPDEBILE. Yes, and then — speak.

URSULA. Then she started out and forbade us to go with her.

POMPDEBILE. The thought of possible ~~distance~~ from us was more than she could bear. Did she say anything before she left?

URSULA [*trembling*]. Yes, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. What was it? She may have gone to self-destruction. What was it?

URSULA. She said —

POMPDEBILE. Speak, woman, speak.

URSULA. She said that Your Majesty —

POMPDEBILE. A farewell message!! Go on.

URSULA [*gasping*]. That Your Majesty was “pokey” and that she didn’t intend to stay there any longer.

POMPDEBILE [*roaring*]. Pokey!!

URSULA. Yes, Your Majesty, and she bade me call her when you came, but we can’t find her, Your Majesty.

*The PASTRY COOKS whisper. URSULA is in tears.*



CHANCELLOR. This should not be countenanced, Your Majesty. The word "pokey" cannot be found in the dictionary. It is the most flagrant disrespect to use a word that is not in the dictionary in connection with a king.

POMPDEBILE. We are quite aware of that, Chancellor, and although we may appear calm on the surface, inwardly we are swelling, swelling, with rage and indignation.

KNAVE [*looking out the window*]. I see the Lady Violetta in the garden. [*He goes to the door and holds it open, bowing.*] The Lady Violetta is at the door, Your Majesty.

*Enter THE LADY VIOLETTA, her purple train over her arm. She has been running.*

VIOLETTA. Am I late? I just remembered and came as fast as I could. I bumped into a sentry and he fell down. I didn't. That's strange, isn't it? I suppose it's because he stands in one position so long he — Why, Pompy dear, what's the matter? Oh, oh! [*Walking closer.*] Your feelings are hurt!

POMPDEBILE. Don't call us Pompy. It doesn't seem to matter to you whether you are divorced or not.

VIOLETTA [*anxiously*]. Is that why your feelings are hurt?

POMPDEBILE. Our feelings are not hurt, not at all.

VIOLETTA. Oh, yes, they are, Pompdebile dear. I know, because they are connected with your eyebrows. When your feelings go down, up go your eyebrows, and when your feelings go up, they go down — always.

POMPDEBILE [*severely*]. Where have you been?

VIOLETTA. I, just now?

POMPDEBILE. Just now, when you should have been outside that door, waiting breathlessly.



VIOLETTA. I was in the garden. Really, Pompy, you couldn't expect me to stay all day in that ridiculous pantry; and as for being breathless, it's quite impossible to be it unless one has been jumping or something.

POMPDEBILE. What were you doing in the garden?

VIOLETTA [*laughing*]. Oh, it was too funny. I must tell you. I found a goat there who had a beard just like the Chancellor's — really it was quite remarkable, the resemblance — in other ways, too. I took him by the horns and I looked deep into his eyes, and I said, "Chancellor, if you try to influence Pompy ——"

POMPDEBILE [*shouting*]. Don't call us Pompy.

VIOLETTA. Excuse, Pomp — [*checking herself*].

KNAVE. And yet I think I remember hearing of an emperor, a great emperor, named Pompey.

POMPDEBILE. We know him not. Begin at once; the people are clamoring at the gates. Bring the ingredients.

*The PASTRY COOKS open the door, and six little boys march in bearing large jars of butter, salt, flour, pepper, cinnamon and milk. The COOKS place a table and a large bowl and a pan in front of the LADY VIOLETTA and give her a spoon. The six little boys stand three on each side.*

VIOLETTA. Oh, what darling little ingredients! May I have an apron, please? [URSULA *puts a silk apron on the LADY VIOLETTA.*]

BLUE HOSE. We were unable to find a little boy to carry the pepper, My Lady. They all would sneeze in such a disturbing way.

VIOLETTA. This is a perfectly controlled little boy. He hasn't sneezed once.



YELLOW HOSE. That, if it please Your Ladyship, is not a little boy.

VIOLETTA. Oh! How nice! Perhaps she will help me.

CHANCELLOR [*severely*]. You are allowed no help, Lady Violetta.

VIOLETTA. Oh, Chancellor, how cruel of you. [*She takes up the spoon, bowing.*] Your Majesty, Lords and Ladies of the court, I propose to make raspberry tarts.

BLUE HOSE. Heaven be kind to us!

YELLOW HOSE [*suddenly agitated*]. Your Majesty, I implore your forgiveness. There is no raspberry jam in the palace.

POMPDEBILE. What! Who is responsible for this carelessness?

BLUE HOSE. I have the order to the grocer, but it didn't come. [*Aside*] I knew something like this would happen. I knew it.

VIOLETTA [*untying her apron*]. Then, Pompdebile, I'm very sorry — we shall have to postpone it.

CHANCELLOR. If I may be allowed to suggest, Lady Violetta can prepare something else.

KNAVE. The law distinctly says that the Queen-elect has the privilege of choosing the dish which she prefers to prepare.

VIOLETTA. Dear Pompdebile, let's give it up. It's such a silly law! Why should a great splendid ruler like you follow it just because one of your ancestors, who wasn't half as nice as you are, or one bit wiser, said to do it? Dearest Pompdebile, please.

POMPDEBILE. We are inclined to think that there may be something in what the Lady Violetta says.

CHANCELLOR. I can no longer remain silent. It is due



to that brilliant law of Pompdebile the First, justly called the Great, that all members of our male sex are well fed, and, as a natural consequence, happy.

KNAVE. The happiness of a set of moles who never knew the sunlight.

POMPDEBILE. If we made an effort, we could think of a new law — just as wise. It only requires effort.

CHANCELLOR. But the constitution. We can't touch the constitution.

POMPDEBILE [*starting up*]. We shall destroy the constitution!

CHANCELLOR. The people are clamoring at the gates!

POMPDEBILE. Oh, I forgot them. No, it has been carried too far. We shall have to go on. Proceed.

VIOLETTA. Without the raspberry jam?

POMPDEBILE [*to KNAVE*]. Go you, and procure some. I will give a hundred golden guineas for it. [*The little Boy who holds the cinnamon pot comes forward.*]

BOY. Please, Your Majesty, I have some.

POMPDEBILE. You! Where?

BOY. In my pocket. If someone would please hold my cinnamon jar — I would get it. [*URSULA takes it. The Boy struggles with his pocket and finally pulls out a small jar.*] There!

VIOLETTA. How clever of you! Do you always do that?

BOY. What — eat raspberry jam?

VIOLETTA. No, supply the exact article needed from your pocket.

BOY. I eat it for my lunch. Please give me the hundred guineas.

VIOLETTA. Oh, yes — Chancellor — if I may trouble you. [*Holds out her hand.*]



CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, this is an outrage! Are you going to allow this?

POMPDEBILE [*sadly*]. Yes, Chancellor. We have such an impulsive nature! [*The LADY VIOLETTA receives the money.*]

VIOLETTA. Thank you. [*She gives it to the BOY.*] Now we are ready to begin. Milk, please. [*The BOY who holds the milk jar comes forward and kneels.*] I take some of this milk and beat it well.

YELLOW HOSE [*in a whisper*]. Beat it — milk!

VIOLETTA. Then I put in two tablespoonfuls of salt, taking great care that it falls exactly in the middle of the bowl. [*To the little BOY.*] Thank you, dear. Now the flour, no, the pepper, and then — one pound of butter. I hope that it is good butter, or the whole thing will be quite spoiled.

BLUE HOSE. This is the most astonishing thing I have ever witnessed.

YELLOW HOSE. I don't understand it.

VIOLETTA [*stirring*]. I find that the butter is not very good. It makes a great difference. I shall have to use more pepper to counteract it. That's better. [*She pours in pepper. The BOY with the pepper pot sneezes violently.*] Oh, oh, dear! Lend him your handkerchief, Chancellor, Knave, oh, will you? [*YELLOW HOSE silences the boy's sneezes with the Knave's handkerchief.*] I think that they are going to turn out very well. Aren't you glad, Chancellor? You shall have one if you will be glad and smile nicely — a little brown tart with raspberry jam in the middle. Now for a dash of vinegar.

COOKS [*in horror*]. Vinegar! Great Goslings! Vinegar!

VIOLETTA [*Stops stirring*]. Vinegar will make them crumbly. Do you like them crumbly, Pompdebile, darling?



They are really for you, you know, since I am trying, by this example, to show all the wives how to please all the husbands.

POMPDEBILE. Remember that they are to go in the museum with the tests of the previous Queens.

VIOLETTA [*thoughtfully*]. Oh, yes, I had forgotten that. Under the circumstances, I shall omit the vinegar. We don't want them too crumbly. They would fall about and catch the dust so frightfully. The museum-keeper would never forgive me in years to come. Now I dip them by the spoonful on this pan; fill them with the nice little boy's raspberry jam — I'm sorry I have to use it all, but you may lick the spoon — put them in the oven, slam the door. Now, my Lord Pompy, the fire will do the rest. [*She curtsies before the KING.*]

POMPDEBILE. It gave us great pleasure to see the ease with which you performed your task. You must have been practising for weeks. This relieves, somewhat, the anxiety under which we have been suffering and makes us think that we would enjoy a game of checkers once more. How long a time will it take for your creation to be thoroughly done, so that it may be tested?

VIOLETTA [*considering*]. About twenty minutes, Pompy.

POMPDEBILE [*to HERALD*]. Inform the people. Come, we will retire. [*To KNAVE.*] Let no one enter until the Lady Violetta commands.

[*All exit, except the KNAVE. He stands in deep thought, his chin in hand — then exits slowly, right. The room is empty. The cuckoo clock strikes. Presently both right and left doors open stealthily. Enter LADY VIOLETTA at one door, the KNAVE at the other, backward, looking down the passage. They turn suddenly and see each other.*]



VIOLETTA [*tearfully*]. O Knave, I can't cook! Anything — anything at all, not even a baked potato.

KNAVE. So I rather concluded, My Lady, a few minutes ago.

VIOLETTA [*pleadingly*]. Don't you think it might just happen that they turned out all right? [*Whispering.*] Take them out of the oven. Let's look.

KNAVE. That's what I intended to do before you came in. It's possible that a miracle has occurred. [*He tries the door.*]

VIOLETTA. Look out; it's hot. Here, take my handkerchief.

KNAVE. The gods forbid, My Lady. [*He takes his hat, and folding it, opens the door and brings out the pan, which he puts on the table softly.*]

VIOLETTA [*with a look of horror*]. How queer! They've melted or something. See, they are quite soft and runny. Do you think that they will be good for anything, Knave?

KNAVE. For paste, My Lady, perhaps.

VIOLETTA. Oh, dear. Isn't it dreadful!

KNAVE. It is.

VIOLETTA [*beginning to cry*]. I don't want to be banished, especially on a mule —

KNAVE. Don't cry, My Lady. It's very — upsetting.

VIOLETTA. I would make a delightful queen. The fêtes that I would give — under the starlight, with soft music stealing from the shadows, fêtes all perfume and deep mystery, where the young — like you and me, Knave — would find the glowing flowers of youth ready to be gathered in all their dewy freshness!

KNAVE. Ah!

VIOLETTA. Those stupid tarts! And wouldn't I make



a pretty picture riding on the white palfrey, garlanded with flowers, followed by the cheers of the populace — Long live Queen Violetta, long live Queen Violetta! Those abominable tarts!

KNAVE. I'm afraid that Her Ladyship is vain.

VIOLETTA. I am indeed. Isn't it fortunate?

KNAVE. Fortunate?

VIOLETTA. Well, I mean it would be fortunate if I were going to be queen. They get so much flattery. The queens who don't adore it as much as I do must be bored to death. Poor things! I'm never so happy as when I am being flattered. It makes me feel all warm and purry. That is another reason why I feel sure I was made to be queen.

KNAVE [*looking ruefully at the pan*]. You will never be queen, My Lady, unless we can think of something quickly, some plan —

VIOLETTA. Oh, yes, dear Knave, please think of a plan at once. Banished people, I suppose, have to comb their own hair, put on their shoes, and button themselves up the back. I have never performed these estimable and worthy tasks, Knave. I don't know how; I don't even know how to scent my bath. I haven't the least idea what makes it smell deliciously of violets. I only know that it always does smell deliciously of violets because I wish it that way. I should be miserable; save me, Knave, please.

KNAVE. My mind is unhappily a blank, Your Majesty.

VIOLETTA. It's very unjust. Indeed, it's unjust! No other queen in the world has to understand cooking; even the Queen of Spades doesn't. Why should the Queen of Hearts, of all people!

KNAVE. Perhaps it is because — I have heard a proverb: "The way to the heart is through the ——"



VIOLETTA [*angrily, stamping her foot*]. Don't repeat that hateful proverb! Nothing can make me more angry. I feel like crying when I hear it, too. Now see, I'm crying. You made me.

KNAVE. Why does that proverb make you cry, My Lady?

VIOLETTA. Oh, because it is such a stupid proverb and so silly, because it's true in most cases, and because — I don't know why.

KNAVE. We are a set of moles here. One might also say that we are a set of mules. How can moles or mules either be expected to understand the point of view of a Bird of Paradise when she ——

VIOLETTA. Bird of Paradise! Do you mean me?

KNAVE [*bowing*]. I do, My Lady, figuratively speaking.

VIOLETTA [*drying her eyes*]. How very pretty of you. Do you know, I think that you would make a splendid chancellor.

KNAVE. Her Ladyship is vain, as I remarked before.

VIOLETTA [*coldly*]. As I remarked before, how fortunate! Have you anything to suggest — a plan?

KNAVE. If only there were time my wife could teach you. Her figure is squat, round, her nose is clumsy, and her eyes stumble over it; but her cooking, ah — [*He blows a kiss.*] it is a thing to dream about. She cooks as naturally as the angels sing. The delicate flavors of her concoctions float over the palate like the perfumes of a thousand flowers. True, her temper, it is anything but sweet — However, I am conceded by many to be the most happily married man in the kingdom.

VIOLETTA [*sadly*]. Yes. That's all they care about here. One may be, oh, so cheerful and kind and nice in



every other way, but if one can't cook nobody loves one at all.

KNAVE. Beasts! My higher nature cries out at them for holding such views. Fools! Swine! But my lower nature whispers that perhaps after all they are not far from right, and as my lower nature is the only one that ever gets any encouragement —

VIOLETTA. Then you think that there is nothing to be done — I shall have to be banished?

KNAVE. I'm afraid — Wait, I have an idea! Dulcinea, my wife — her name is Dulcinea — made known to me this morning, very forcibly — Yes, I remember, I'm sure — Yes, she was going to bake this very morning some raspberry tarts — a dish in which she particularly excels — If I could only procure some of them and bring them here!

VIOLETTA. Oh, Knave, dearest, sweetest Knave, could you, I mean, would you? Is there time? The court will return. [*They tiptoe to the door and listen.*]

KNAVE. I shall run as fast as I can. Don't let anyone come in until I get back, if you can help it. [*He jumps on the table, ready to go out the window.*]

VIOLETTA. Oh, Knave, how clever of you to think of it. It is the custom for the King to grant a boon to the Queen at her coronation. I shall ask that you be made Chancellor.

KNAVE [*turning back*]. Oh, please don't, My Lady, I implore you.

VIOLETTA. Why not?

KNAVE. It would give me a social position, My Lady, and that I would rather die than possess. Oh, how we argue about that, my wife and I! Dulcinea wishes to climb, and the higher she climbs, the less she cooks. Should



you have me made Chancellor, she would never wield a spoon again.

VIOLETTA [*pursing her lips*]. But it doesn't seem fair, exactly. Think of how much I shall be indebted to her. If she enjoys social position, I might as well give her some. We have lots and lots of it lying around.

KNAVE. She wouldn't, My Lady, she wouldn't enjoy it. Dulcinea is a true genius, you understand, and the happiness of a genius lies solely in using his gift. If she didn't cook she would be miserable, although she might not be aware of it, I'm perfectly sure.

VIOLETTA. Then I shall take all social position away from you. You shall rank below the scullery maids. Do you like that better? Hurry, please.

KNAVE. Thank you, My Lady; it will suit me perfectly.

*He goes out with the tarts. VIOLETTA listens; then she takes her skirt between the tips of her fingers and practises in pantomime her anticipated ride on the palfrey. She bows and smiles, until suddenly she remembers the mule standing outside the gates of the palace. The thought saddens her so she curls up on POMPDEBILE'S throne and cries. There is a knock. She flies to the door and holds it shut.*

VIOLETTA [*breathlessly*]. Who is there?

CHANCELLOR. It is I, Lady Violetta. The King wishes to return.

VIOLETTA. Return! Does he? But the tarts are not done. They are not done at all!

CHANCELLOR. You said they would be ready in twenty minutes. His Majesty is impatient.

VIOLETTA. Did you play a game of checkers with him, Chancellor?



CHANCELLOR. Yes.

VIOLETTA. And did you beat him?

CHANCELLOR [*shortly*]. I did not.

VIOLETTA [*laughing*]. How sweet of you. Would you mind doing it again just for me? Or would it be too great a strain on you to keep from beating him twice in succession?

CHANCELLOR. I shall tell the King that you refuse admission.

VIOLETTA *runs to the window to see if the KNAVE is in sight.*

*The CHANCELLOR returns and knocks.*

CHANCELLOR. The King wishes to come in.

VIOLETTA. But the checkers!

CHANCELLOR. The Knights of the Checker Board have taken them away.

VIOLETTA. But the tarts aren't done, really.

CHANCELLOR. You said twenty minutes.

VIOLETTA. No, I didn't — at least, I said twenty minutes for them to get good and warm and another twenty minutes for them to become brown. That makes forty — don't you remember?

CHANCELLOR. I shall carry your message to His Majesty.

VIOLETTA *again rushes to the window and peers up the road.*

CHANCELLOR [*knocking loudly*]. The King commands you to open the door.

VIOLETTA. Commands! Tell him — Is he there — with you?

CHANCELLOR. His Majesty is at the door.

VIOLETTA. Pompy, I think you are rude, very rude



indeed. I don't see how you can be so rude — to command me, your own Violetta who loves you so. [*She looks again for the KNAVE.*] Oh, dear! Where can he be!!

POMPDEBILE [*outside*]. This is nonsense. Don't you see how worried we are? It is a compliment to you —

VIOLETTA. Well, come in; I don't care — only I'm sure they are not finished. [*She opens the door. The KING walks to his throne. He finds Lady Violetta's handkerchief on it.*]

POMPDEBILE [*holding up handkerchief*]. What is this?

VIOLETTA. Oh, that's my handkerchief.

POMPDEBILE. It is very damp. Can it be that you are anxious, that you are afraid?

VIOLETTA. How silly, Pompy. I washed my hands, as one always does after cooking. But there was no towel, so I used my handkerchief instead of my petticoat, which is made of chiffon and is very perishable.

CHANCELLOR. Is the Lady Violetta ready to produce her work?

VIOLETTA. I don't understand what you mean by work, Chancellor. Oh, the tarts! They were quite simple — quite simple to make — no work at all — A little imagination is all one needs for such things, just imagination. You agree with me, don't you, Pompy, that imagination will work wonders — will do almost anything, in fact? I remember —

POMPDEBILE. The Pastry Cooks will remove the tarts from the oven.

VIOLETTA. Oh, no, Pompy! They are not finished or cooked, or whatever one calls it. They are not. The last five minutes is of the greatest importance. Please don't let them touch them! Please —



POMPDEBILE. There, there, my dear Violetta, calm yourself. If you wish, they will put them back again. There can be no harm in looking at them. Come, I will hold your hand.

VIOLETTA. That will help a great deal, Pompy, your holding my hand.

*She scrambles up on the throne beside the KING.*

CHANCELLOR [*in horror*]. On the throne, Your Majesty?

POMPDEBILE. Of course not, Chancellor. We regret that you are not yet entitled to sit on the throne, my dear. In a little while —

VIOLETTA [*coming down*]. Oh, I see. May I sit here, Chancellor, in this seemingly humble position at his feet? Of course, I can't really be humble when he is holding my hand and enjoying it so much.

POMPDEBILE. Violetta! [*To the COOKS.*] Sample the tarts. This suspense is unbearable.

*The PASTRY COOKS after bowing, walk to the oven door and open it. They fall back in astonishment so great that they lose their balance, but they quickly scramble to their feet again.*

YELLOW HOSE. Your Majesty, there are no tarts there!

BLUE HOSE. Your Majesty, the tarts have gone!

VIOLETTA [*clasping her hands*]. Gone! Oh, where could they have gone?

POMPDEBILE [*coming down from throne*]. That is impossible.

PASTRY COOKS. You see, you see the oven is empty as a drum.

POMPDEBILE [*to VIOLETTA*]. Did you go out of this room?



VIOLETTA [*wailing*]. Only for a few minutes, Pompy, to powder my nose before the mirror in the pantry. When one cooks one becomes so disheveled, doesn't one? But if I had thought for one little minute —

POMPDEBILE [*interrupting*]. The tarts have been stolen!

VIOLETTA [*with a shriek*]. Stolen! Oh, I shall faint; help me! Oh, oh, to think that any one would take my delicious little, my dear little tarts! My salts. Oh! Oh! PASTRY COOKS *run to the door and call*.

YELLOW HOSE. Salts! Bring the Lady Violetta's salts.

BLUE HOSE. The Lady Violetta has fainted!

URSULA *enters*

URSULA. Here, here — What has happened? Oh, My Lady, my sweet mistress!

POMPDEBILE. Some wretch has stolen the tarts. [LADY VIOLETTA *moans*.]

URSULA. Bring some water. I will take off her head-dress and bathe her forehead.

VIOLETTA [*sitting up*]. I feel better now. Where am I? What is the matter? I remember. Oh, my poor tarts!

CHANCELLOR [*suspiciously*]. Your Majesty, this is very strange.

URSULA. I know, Your Majesty. It was the Knave. One of the Queen's women, who was walking in the garden, saw the Knave jump out of this window with a tray in his hand. It was the Knave.

VIOLETTA. Oh, I don't think it was he. I don't really.

POMPDEBILE. The scoundrel. Of course it was he. We shall banish him for this or have him beheaded.

CHANCELLOR. It should have been done long ago, Your Majesty.



POMPDEBILE. You are right.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty will never listen to me.

POMPDEBILE. We do listen to you. Be quiet.

VIOLETTA. What are you going to do, Pompy, dear?

POMPDEBILE. Herald, issue a proclamation at once. Let it be known all over the Kingdom that I desire that the Knave be brought here dead or alive. Send the royal detectives and policemen in every direction.

CHANCELLOR. Excellent; just what I should have advised had Your Majesty listened to me.

POMPDEBILE. Be quiet. I never have a brilliant thought but you claim it. It is insufferable!

CHANCELLOR. I resign.

POMPDEBILE. Good. We accept your thirty-eighth resignation at once.

CHANCELLOR. You did me the honor to appoint me as your Chancellor, Your Majesty, yet never, never do you give me an opportunity to chancel. That is my only grievance. You must admit, Your Majesty, that as your advisers advise you, as your dressers dress you, as your hunters hunt, as your bakers bake, your Chancellor should be allowed to chancel. However, I will be just — as I have been with you so long; before I leave, I will give you a month's notice.

POMPDEBILE. That isn't necessary.

CHANCELLOR. It's in the constitution.

POMPDEBILE. Be quiet.

VIOLETTA. Well, I think as things have turned out so — so unfortunately, I shall change my gown. [*To* URSULA.] Put out my cloth of silver with the moonstones. It is always a relief to change one's gown. May I have my handkerchief, Pompy? Rather a pretty one, isn't it, Pompy?



Of course you don't object to my calling you Pompy now. When I'm in trouble it's a comfort, like holding your hand.

POMPDEBILE. You may hold our hand, too, Violetta.

VIOLETTA. Oh, how good you are, how sympathetic! But you see it's impossible just now, as I have to change my gown — unless you will come with me while I change.

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty!

POMPDEBILE. Be quiet! You have been discharged! [*He starts to descend, when a HERALD bursts in. He kneels before POMPDEBILE.*]

HERALD. We have found him; we have found him, Your Majesty. In fact, I found him all by myself! He was sitting under the shrubbery eating a tart. I stumbled over one of his legs and fell. "How easy it is to send man and all his pride into the dust," he said, and then — I saw him.

POMPDEBILE. Eating a tart! Eating a tart, did you say? The scoundrel! Bring him here immediately. [*The HERALD exits and returns with the KNAVE. The KNAVE carries a tray of tarts in his hand.*]

POMPDEBILE. How dare you — you — you —

KNAVE [*bowing*]. Knave, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. You Knave, you shall be punished for this.

CHANCELLOR. Behead him, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Yes, behead him at once.

VIOLETTA. Oh, no, Pompy, not that! It is not severe enough.

POMPDEBILE. Not severe enough, to cut off a man's head! Really, Violetta —

VIOLETTA. No, because, you see, when one has been beheaded, one's consciousness that one has been beheaded comes off too. It is inevitable. And then, what does it matter, when one doesn't know? Let us think of some-



thing really cruel — really fiendish. I have it — deprive him of social position for the rest of his life — force him to remain a mere knave, forever.

POMPDEBILE. You are right.

KNAVE. Terrible as this punishment is, I admit that I deserve it, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. What prompted you to commit this dastardly crime?

KNAVE. All my life I have had a craving for tarts of any kind. There is something in my nature that demands tarts — something in my constitution that cries out for them — and I obey my constitution as rigidly as does the Chancellor seek to obey his. I was in the garden reading, as is my habit, when a delicate odor floated to my nostrils, a persuasive odor, a seductive, light brown, flaky odor, and an odor so enticing, so suggestive of tarts fit for the gods — that I could stand it no longer. It was stronger than I. With one gesture I threw reputation, my chances for future happiness, to the winds, and leaped through the window. The odor led me to the oven. I seized a tart, and eating, experienced the one perfect moment of my existence. After having eaten that one tart, my craving for other tarts has disappeared. I shall live with the memory of that first tart before me forever, or die content, having tasted true perfection.

POMPDEBILE. M-m-m, how extraordinary! Let him be beaten fifteen strokes on the back. Now, Pastry Cooks to the Royal Household, we await your decision! [*The COOKS bow. Each selects a tart, then puts it in his mouth. An expression of absolute ecstasy comes over their faces. They clasp hands, then fall on each other's necks, weeping.*] What on earth is the matter?



YELLOW HOSE. Excuse our emotion. It is because we have at last encountered a true genius, a great master, or rather mistress, of our art.

POMPDEBILE. They are good, then?

BLUE HOSE. Good! They are angelic!

POMPDEBILE. Give one of the tarts to us. We would sample it.

*The KING samples one.*

POMPDEBILE. My dear, they are marvels! marvels! [*He leads VIOLETTA to the throne.*] Your throne, my dear.

VIOLETTA [*sitting with a sigh*]. I'm glad it's such a comfortable one.

POMPDEBILE. Knave, we forgive your offense. The temptation was very great. There are things that mere human nature cannot be expected to resist. Another tart, Cooks, and yet another!

CHANCELLOR. But, Your Majesty, don't eat them all. They must go to the museum with the dishes of the previous Queens of Hearts.

YELLOW HOSE. A museum — those tarts! As well lock a rose in a money box.

CHANCELLOR. But the constitution commands it. How else can we commemorate, for future generations, this event?

KNAVE. Ah, Your Majesty, please, I will commemorate it in a rhyme.

POMPDEBILE. How can a mere rhyme serve to keep this affair in the minds of the people?

KNAVE. It is the only way to keep it in the minds of the people. No event is truly deathless unless its monument



be built in rhyme. Consider that fall which, though insignificant in itself, became the most famous of all history, because someone happened to put it into rhyme. The crash of it sounded through centuries and will vibrate for generations to come.

VIOLETTA. You mean the fall of the Holy Roman Empire?

KNAVE. No, Madam, I refer to the fall of Humpty Dumpty.

POMPDEBILE. Well, make your rhyme. In the meantime let us celebrate. You may all have one tart. [*To VIOLETTA.*] Are you willing, dear, to ride the white palfrey garlanded with flowers through the streets of the city?

VIOLETTA. Willing! I have been practising for days!

POMPDEBILE. The people, I suppose, are still clamoring at the gates.

VIOLETTA. Oh, yes, they must clamor. I want them to. Herald, tell them that to every man I shall toss a flower, to every woman a shining gold piece, but to the babies I shall throw only kisses, thousands of them, like little winged birds. Kisses and gold and roses! They will surely love me then!

CHANCELLOR. Your Majesty, I protest. Of what possible use to the people —?

POMPDEBILE. Be quiet. The Queen may scatter what she pleases.

KNAVE. My rhyme is ready, Your Majesty.

POMPDEBILE. Repeat it.

KNAVE.

The Queen of Hearts  
She made some tarts  
All on a summer's day.



The Knave of Hearts  
He stole those tarts  
And took them quite away.

The King of Hearts  
Called for those tarts  
And beat the Knave full sore.  
The Knave of Hearts  
Brought back the tarts  
And vowed he'd sin no more.

VIOLETTA. My dear Knave, how wonderful of you!  
You shall be Poet Laureate. A Poet Laureate has no  
social position, has he?

KNAVE. It depends, Your Majesty, upon whether or  
not he chooses to be more laureate than poet.

VIOLETTA [*rising*]. Your Majesty! Those words go to  
my head — like wine!

KNAVE. Long live Pompdebile the Eighth, the Queen  
Violetta!

*The trumpets sound.*

HERALDS. Make way for Pompdebile the Eighth and  
Queen Violetta!

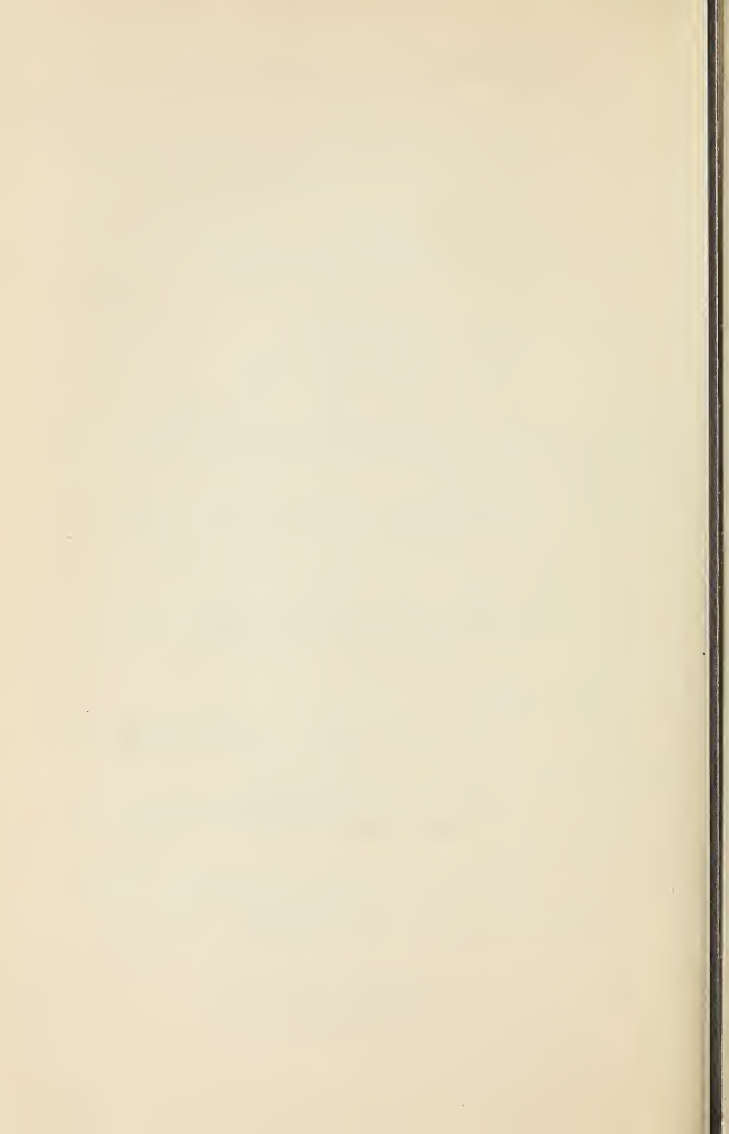
VIOLETTA [*excitedly*]. Vee-oletta, please!

HERALDS. Make way for Pompdebile the Eighth, and  
Queen Vee-oletta!

*The KING and QUEEN show themselves at the door — and the  
people can be heard clamoring outside.*

CURTAIN

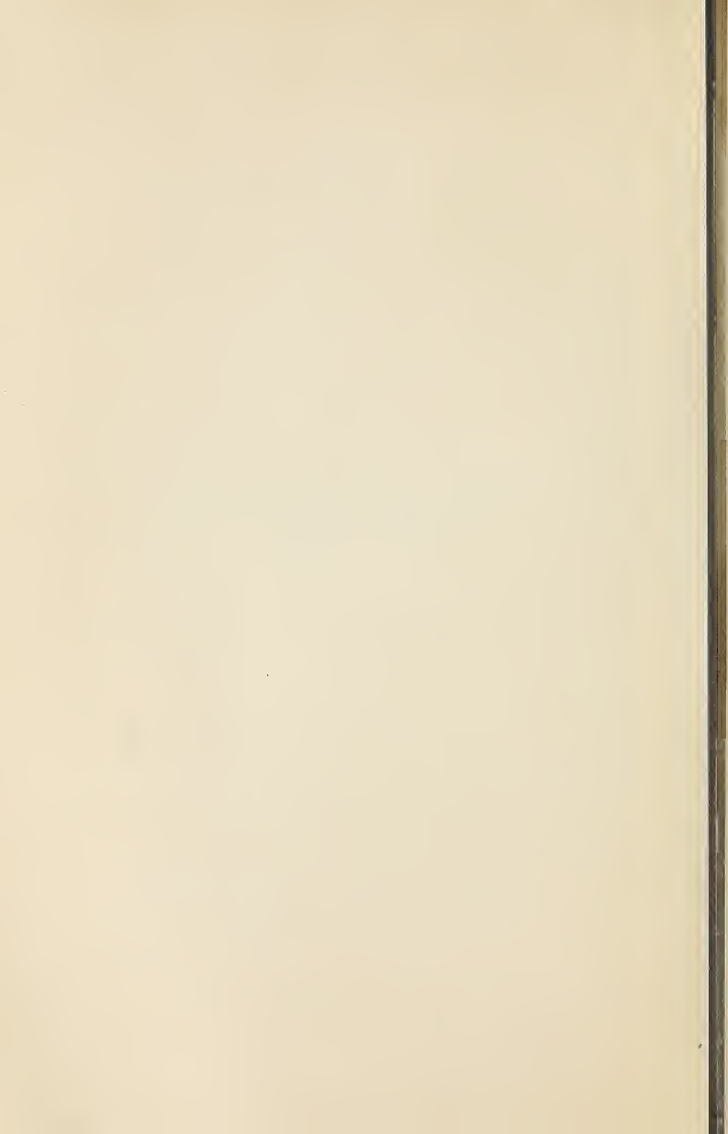






QUESTIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR  
COACHING PLAYS







## A NIGHT AT AN INN

This is an atmosphere play. Lord Dunsany wrote it for the romantic spirit which, however denied, is in all of us. A sense of mystery envelops it, of adventure, of the supernatural, of a miracle at hand. And yet all this happens in apparently commonplace surroundings, and to people who act and talk in a perfectly natural way.

How can this atmosphere be immediately projected? First, feel it yourselves. Get yourselves into the mood. How are the men grouped when the curtain rises? The stage directions say, "Albert sits a little apart." Would you have him as far away as the Toff? Why or why not? What would you have the three men doing? Should conversation begin the instant the curtain rises? Why?

What characters are to be projected by the actors? The three men have the common characteristics of "crooks" and "tough guys"; but they are individually different. Who is the strongest of the three? The weakest? The most boastful? How can the quiet superiority of the Toff be projected?

Do the opening bit in pantomime until you are able to project atmosphere and character.

How can the three men show that they are talking about the Toff in the opening lines? How can they show that the place is getting on their nerves? What about pitch and tone of voice in these opening lines?

What is the atmospheric value of Albert's line, "But they kind of know." Why does Sniggers repeat the line? What is the atmospheric value of the references to what was done to poor old Jim? What would be the reaction of the other men to the reference to Jim?

What effect on the men have the Toff's lines, "Yes, I hear," and, "Well done, Albert!" Does the Toff look at them while he speaks?

At what point do the men rise? Why? Do they rise all together?

What effect does the Toff's giving up the ruby so easily have on the men? Can you show any sense of impending disaster here? Work on the exit of the men, making it express everything you want it to express.



Take plenty of time for the Toff's pantomime after the exit. Be sure that the Toff gives us always a sense of *ease* and *quiet* confidence.

Notice how the tempo changes after the return of the men, and how the Toff gradually slows it down. Suppressed excitement becomes stronger from this point to the end.

What point is made by having the Toff light a cigarette?

Notice how the quiet intensity of the suspense is increased by having the door open *slowly*. Be sure the Toff shows no excitement, only a calm mastery of the situation. If you are doing this play for a class project it is not necessary to have the priests appear. If the three men and the Toff are good at pantomime, if they are sincerely in the mood of the play, the three murders can be performed with a perfect projection of feeling without the priests.

If the priests do appear, which would be necessary in a public production, vary their entrances. The first one wriggles along the floor. The second crawls on all fours. The last is seen at the window before his entrance, and after it, stands with his back against the door. Additional business is explained in the text. The struggles with the priests should be noiseless.

After the murders, notice the quick return to relief and to a sort of forced naturalism. Work up quite a convivial atmosphere for the drinking of healths. *But* be careful not to overdo commonplaceness. There is still a carried-over sense of disaster. The men are a little too cocksure. Do you think they feel as confident as they appear? Can you show that? *Do not forget the dead priests on the floor.*

Here you have the dramatic contrast between the terror of the men and the terror of Sniggers. Remember that Sniggers' terror is weak, abject, cringing, with a sense of indescribable horror. Do not do anything here which will destroy the atmosphere. Full of excitement as this scene is, there is a *hush* about it.

Again, if you are doing this for a class project, the idol need not appear. We can see him perfectly in our imaginations if the men on the stage are successful in pantomiming horror, following with their eyes, as in a ghastly trance, the movements of the idol.

The effect of the idol is still present, after its exit. Why does Albert speak "in a childish, plaintive voice"?

The voice off stage must be deep and impressive. The men make their exit as in a hypnotic trance. Notice Sniggers' pantomime at the



window. Everything must be done quietly, simply. While the happenings of this play are strange and weird, they are made to seem simple and natural.

The setting and lighting of this play offers a most interesting project. The atmosphere may be beautifully conveyed in the ordinary surroundings of a classroom. But it is best done in a set that is simple, suggestive, expressive, not grotesque. The color tones should be low in value like those of a Rembrandt picture.

The idol may be represented by a green light, or by a great shadow projected on the back drop. This can be done by painting the figure of the idol on a slide and projecting the shadow by stereopticon. The shadow can be made to move by moving the slide.

Differentiate the costumes of the three men: one might wear a jersey, another a flannel shirt, another a coat buttoned over a jersey. The Toff should wear clothes that are neat and well cut, even if a little shabby. If the idol actually appears, he should of course wear a green robe and an elaborate headdress. Get pictures of Hindu idols and their priests, if possible, for the study of costume. The *National Geographic* for July, 1926, contains some excellent Indian illustrations. The characteristic dress of the priest seems to be a coarse yellow robe draped over one shoulder. Do not forget the gold spots on the forehead. For make-up do not use black, but coffee-color.

The stage directions say, "an armchair conceals the three men" from the entering priests. An armchair that could conceal three men would be of mammoth proportions, but a chair flanked by a cupboard does very well.

### THE WEATHER BREEDER

The mood is comedy. The business of the kiss sets it at once. Do not farce nor burlesque this. The mood is maintained throughout. The tragic moment when the crop is in danger is lightened by the old man's mood of exultation.

This is a comedy of character. And the characters, while broadly drawn, are intensely human, and should not be played as farce characters. Old John, for example, should not be played in "hick" fashion; but as a "sour" old man in whom the natural urge to say, "I told you so!" has become exaggerated to an obsession. He must



not be played unsympathetically, we must be able to *enjoy* the character. His dour face, his sulky voice should be done with humor; his transition to childish glee when his woeful prophecies have come true; his second transition to disappointment and a relapse to the former mood are delightful. He may have a set jaw and frowning brow, but he is not without a twinkle.

The three young men are all a contrast to John in cheerfulness, their moods changing to gloom as John's changes to glee. Murl's dejection is the least marked, while his sympathy is strong. Jim is played attractively as the lover, while Levi is slower and more practical. Their discouragement has always an element of the comic; for it increases exactly as John's decreases, and Jim's peevishness against "Paw," and his little bursts of temper are quite as childish as "Paw's" own.

Lize is practical, hardworking, conscientious, patient. She is in love with Jim, but her conscientiousness and practicality keep her from any particular demonstration. She is "used to" Paw, and not without a certain affection for him. She has two moments of strong emotion; weeping over the supposed loss of the crop, and her embrace of "Paw."

Lize is at the left of the table, so that she must turn to look out of the window. She can sit on a stool and peel apples as she talks. Jim at the right of the table may sit on table or stool on the line "It ain't loud swearing," rising on "Seems kinda queer." Levi, R.; Jim, C.; Lize, L. John enters C., the boys grouped R. Then Jim crosses to John and Lize is up center. The action until the exit of Levi centers on John, all three of the others watching him nervously. The "sur-reptitious flirtation" must be timed not to detract from John's lines; and, like the opening bit of business, must not be farced. Jim strolls R. on "There ain't no hurry." After Levi's entrance the action focuses at the window. After the exit of the two men Lize hovers near the door. Murl stands near the window at first, then walks back and forth between window and door. When Lize weeps she drops onto the stool R. After she opens the door, she goes to the left of the table. Jim sits R., Levi on the water-pail bench, and Murl stands watching the storm over John's shoulder. After Jim moves over to comfort Lize, Levi crosses to the window, and Murl to the door. Other business is given in the text. These are but mechanical direc-



tions for keeping a balanced stage. The real action of the play must be suggested by the feeling.

This is a naturalistic setting; yet it can follow all the principles of stagecraft in simplicity, harmoniousness, expressiveness and suggestion. The lighting is extremely important. Floods are required outside window and door — amber, changing to green, and out.

Simple as they are, the colors are important. Dull blues, browns, greys, with a touch of dull red will give the right suggestion. The play affords an interesting study in make-up; the problem of strong types, which must not be burlesque nor stagey; which should be contrasting, yet with great similarity; absolutely simple, yet unmistakable.

This play is a good exercise in *climax*. At what point does the climax occur? Notice how a sense of the climax is present from the first.

### THE PROPOSAL

This is a farce. Remember that farce is pitched in a high key, and played in rapid tempo. This play should be rehearsed many times for the sake of speed alone.

Since farce is more simple than comedy and depends more on its situation, these characters will be found rather simple in their reactions. All three are hot-tempered, pig-headed, unreasonable. All three have a petty pride in their own possessions, and all have an eye to the main chance. All three will fight like alley cats when their pet prejudices are touched. When you add that Chubukov has effusive manners, that Natalya Stepanovna is of a practical nature and has made up her mind to have a husband, and that Lomov is worried to death about his really excellent health and is exceedingly suspicious, you have the three. And a precious trio they are for a farce.

This play is a wonderful exercise (*a*) in pantomime. After you have learned the lines take the whole thing as a pantomime. Do it several times. When you have once warmed to the excitement of the thing, you will find that your action becomes spirited and full of meaning. You must be convinced that your opponent is a thief and a liar in order to give a really colorful performance!

This is also an exercise in (*b*) rhythm. Not only do the entrances and exits occur in perfect rhythm — Lomov, Chubukov, Natalya



Stepanovna, Chubukov, Lomov, Lomov, Chubukov; but the feeling comes in cycles. First the quarrel between Lomov and Natalya Stepanovna rises to a climax, includes Chubukov, rises to another climax and dies out. Then a quarrel between father and daughter flares up rapidly and dies with the second entrance of Lomov. Then the second quarrel with Lomov begins, having gained some momentum from the first difficulty, rises to a climax, includes Chubukov, comes to another climax and descends to Lomov's fainting fit, leaves father and daughter in hysterics, calms into a semblance of a brief reconciliation only to blaze up into a third outburst at the curtain.

This play also affords the student a splendid opportunity to study (c) climax. Find the climax of each scene, and lead up to it gradually. Do not begin any scene on too high a pitch or you will have a series of anticlimaxes or of dead levels. But notice that each scene begins at a slightly higher pitch than the one before it, owing to the momentum it gained from the preceding scene. Each quarrel has a left-over momentum from the preceding quarrel, and therefore goes faster and rises higher than the one before it.

Be careful not to become incoherent, only to give the illusion of being excited to the point of incoherence. We have said many times that the stage is not actuality, but only appearance. Every word should be heard, every idea should get across, no matter how the pitch increases.

The play is, of course, Russian; and while both characters and emotions have a universal quality there is much that is peculiarly Russian. Therefore it becomes necessary to suggest the Russian in costuming and setting. Note that your people are not peasants, they are landowners and persons of standing in the community. Yet Natalya Stepanovna comes into the drawing-room in an apron, and Lomov's evening dress creates quite a sensation. Do you think the word "negligée" means what is usually meant by negligée, or is it an expression for a careless type of dress? Your stage may be made very interesting. May I suggest richness of coloring, heavy furniture, and the use of Russian brass.



# THE TWILIGHT SAINT

This play was selected primarily for its values in reading lines. It also affords an excellent opportunity for characterization and atmosphere. It is also the only period play in the book, and as such offers an interesting problem in setting and costuming.

It has already been suggested that you study the play as an exercise in reading lines, taking the longer speeches and preparing them according to Chapter Eight. We assume that this has been done.

Guido is young, impetuous, Italian, poetic. The fact that he is Italian gives color to his characterization, warmth to his voice, accent to his movements. Do not overdo; it would be hopeless for most of you to attempt an Italian characterization; it would spoil the mood of the play, and even develop into burlesque. These suggestions are merely to give color to the picture. Guido's mood in the beginning of the play is restless, discouraged, full of a passionate resentment against fate. He loves Lisetta, but he is thinking only of himself. His tone is bitter. In the last part of the play he is still the impetuous Guido (be careful not to flatten out your characterization here); if he were not, he would not have been affected by St. Francis so easily. But he is no longer restless, bitter, discouraged. He is thinking of Lisetta. He is the old eager, poetic Guido; but it is love and not ambition that motivates him.

Pia is an excellent character picture. She is old, kind, garrulous. She has not the least idea what is the matter with Guido. "Thy corner is too hot." She interrupts his passionate reverie with, "If I should stew in milk the peas, maybe —" Like all Italians, however, she is not without poetry. How charming is her firefly song. Her character undergoes less change than the others. Always kind, she only shows more tenderness after the visit of St. Francis. She is perhaps a little more serene, less fussy, than before. Remember she is more of the peasant than the others.

Lisetta is lovely, pathetic; at first despairing, at last filled with a quiet joy and peace. *Do not make her a whining invalid*, nor too tame. She also is Italian and she loves Guido passionately.

St. Francis is by far the most difficult characterization. In a few lines he must get across to the audience a personality of power as well as of "sweetness and light." Do not make him either sad or preachy.



It is the "peace that passeth understanding" that emanates from him. He is quiet always, but not sad. Do not characterize him as old. In 1215 he was thirty-three. Read something of his life before attempting to project his character.

The mood of the play is always quiet, deepening into twilight at the end; but there is an undercurrent of strong feeling through it all. The Italian interior with its arched doorway, the sunlight changing to twilight, the music of the shepherd's pipe (use flute or clarinet) adds greatly to the atmosphere. Get yourself into the mood of the different characters: Guido restless, discouraged — a young man chained to distasteful tasks and resenting them.

"O Blessed God! — stifled with creature needs,  
And with necessity about my throat!"

Pia, busy, talkative, a little complaining because Guido pays no attention to her. Lisetta, quiet but tense.

The stage directions give you the arrangement of the stage, and the position of the characters.

If you have character, lines, and mood there is little the director can add. The business follows naturally, it is very simple, an outgrowth from the feeling. Would you have Guido continue to sit until his exit? Remember he is restless and impulsive. At what point should he rise? Where is the feeling strong enough to bring him to his feet? Once up, what would he naturally do? What action does "pages of cursed sonnets," suggest to you? What action in, "Look, Pia, how she lieth there —" Pia's suggestion that Guido take a walk might be motivated partly by his going to the door, and standing there, looking with unseeing eyes.

Remember that acting is "the art of listening." Show Pia's mental reactions to Guido's speeches; the fact that she thinks he is touched by the sun would be shown how? *Not* by an obvious gesture. During what lines of his? Notice her gossip interest in Guido's story of his friend, the poet; how she looks at Lisetta with kindly concern; how sometimes she pays no attention whatever to Guido, but is busy with her pea-shelling. Guido, of course, is absorbed in his own thoughts; perhaps a movement of impatience at her lack of understanding (after what speech?), or an expression of kindness — when? — is his sole reaction to her. He goes out with bent head and no backward look.



The scene with Pia and Lisetta is self-explanatory.

The entrance of St. Francis is most important. It is necessary that we feel at once that here is a personality of force. Pia bustles about (without detracting from the central interest, Francis) getting the bread, cheese, and lentils. She sinks entirely into the background in the last part of the scene, of course without losing character. Note that she is sorry for Francis, he eats so little (what light this throws on Pia's character, and probably on her figure!), but changes to an attitude of extreme reverence, a simple, peasant reverence, at the end. Do not omit the business of asking a blessing at first, and of a benediction at parting. What is Lisetta's feeling when she says, "Little Brother!" What half imploring gesture accompanies it? Notice the author's stage directions at the end of the scene, and during the scene with Lisetta.

The song should be sung not as a solo; it is hardly more than humming. It is not at all necessary that the person who plays Pia should be able to sing well. The shepherd's pipe should also be very faint. Pia looks back on her exit. Does St. Francis?

Remember that when Guido enters he thinks that Lisetta is asleep. Let the action of the rest of the scene be a reflection of the feeling. While you must not make Lisetta too tame, she must never be vigorous. She is, of course, always an invalid, but that does not mean that she whines. Guido's final kiss on "Good-night," should be almost in the nature of a benediction. Where is such a kiss placed? He rises from his knees and sits beside her (on what words?) and the play ends with the utmost quiet, as Lisetta falls peacefully asleep, and the shepherd's pipe is very faintly heard.

The setting consists of a humble Italian interior — an arched doorway without a door, a small arched window rather high in the wall, a plain neutral background, probably grey, since the house would most likely be of stone. The furniture is very simple; a cot for a bed, well covered (don't suggest the modern sanitary cot!) a rude table, a bench, and two stools. The fireplace should be rude and well smoked. Note the author's suggestion about copper vessels and sheepskins. There should be color in the scene: in the coverings of the bed, and in the costumes. Let your lighting come from the window and the door. Dim lights gradually from Guido's exit to the end, changing from amber to purple twilight at the end. If you want to attempt the



symbolism of having the light grow brighter on the entrance of St. Francis, do so, but by no means use a spotlight. The light in the fireplace should always be very low. Do not try to follow the author's suggestion of the landscape on the back drop. Use a plain blue drop if possible; if not, a plain grey wall will do.

St. Francis, of course, wears the plain brown robe of the Franciscan order with sandals, a rope girdle, and a rosary. Find pictures of Franciscan friars. Do not suggest a nightgown with Lisetta. Let her have a deep blue shawl-like drapery around her shoulders. The drapery of her bed might then be a very dark red, or a very dull purple — by no means a royal purple. Pia should wear a peasant skirt, dull green, perhaps, with a kerchief of different color. Guido's costume might be a dull purple, if dark red is used for the bed. It should be shabby, of course.

Do not stumble on pronunciation of Italian words: As-sí'si, Gui'do, Pí'a, Pe-rú'zhi-a, U-gō-lí'no.

This play can be successfully given with a cast of girls.

### MY LADY'S ROSE

Why is this play a tragedy? Is the whole play done in the tragedy key? Does it ever entirely go into the comedy mood? Notice how the pathetic little black figure of Annie always on the stage keeps the mood of the play sombre. Notice also that while the tragedy is sordid and commonplace enough, that it has a universal quality. This is emphatically a "slice of life." Undeniably it is also, like *The Weather Breeder*, a slice of theatre too. By the way, what is meant by the expression "good theatre"? Is it necessary to play Mrs. Moss as a Jewish woman? What is gained by doing so? While she adds a touch of comedy, she must not be allowed in the slightest degree to suggest the vaudeville stage. She is slatternly, motherly, intensely matter-of-fact, and a sharp hand at a bargain.

The danger in characterizing Annie is in making her whining and overly sentimental. She is pathetic, but she represents a universal tragic experience and there must be no whining.

Liza is crude, full of life, as unfeeling as Annie is sensitive, but never intentionally cruel. Like Mrs. Moss, she adds comedy, but



must not be played slapstick. Nor must she be played unsympathetically. "Stewing all day in a pickle factory" is no joke. Liza has her troubles.

Jack is rather strongly in the comedy mood. His entrance is bluff and breezy, his exit almost farce. But he has more feeling and understanding than Liza. The last part of his scene with Annie should be played with a sort of awkward intensity.

Annie, of course, sits at the table during the entire play. Mrs. Moss, after the business with the fire and kettle, comes to the table, leaning over to inspect Annie's work, and to finger her hair. She sits on "Oh, did they?" She might darn her stocking without removing it from her foot or have other business of sewing while Annie is telling the story. Liza, after her dance step, takes off her things and gets tea, taking things from the cupboard. Remember again that the stage is only illusion. Business must be *timed*. It must never interfere with lines or mood, it should follow the suggestion of either, and be so timed that it leaves both lines and mood free when necessary. For example, Annie's mood may be emphasized by the haste with which she works on her roses, or by the fact that she works with dragging weariness, or that she lets the flowers fall. The business of the rest of the play is indicated by the stage directions. Amateurs often make the mistake of too much business, relying on a hodge-podge of action to interest the audience, rather than on feeling. Every piece of business should have its meaning. The directions of the exit of Jack and Liza are misleading. If properly managed, Liza should start toward the door on "Goo'-night, Annie." Jack should attempt to kiss her, Liza should push him back toward center, and hurry off with him in pursuit. The last part of the play must be done in the tragic spirit, but with no sentimentality, ranting, or straining for effect; everything must have absolute naturalness, and depth of feeling.

While the setting should suggest poverty and sordidness, it need not be devoid of color.

Those not familiar with the cockney accent will find it difficult to give the right flavor to the speech. Of course, cockney spoken as it is in the slums of London would be no more intelligible to an American audience than would Chinese. The words should be given in a staccato manner. The *h*'s are misplaced, there is the sound of *a* in *ow* (*aow*), long *e* is almost *a* (*tay*), and long *a* is long *i* (*tike*).



*Note.* This play was selected because it is a tragedy of the commonplace, in which there is a mingling of comedy, as in life. A similar play with an American setting is *The Eldest* by Edna Ferber in *The Appleton Book of Short Plays*.

## THE KNAVE OF HEARTS

What is the atmosphere of this play? Is it comedy, fantasy, or a mixture of both? Which predominates? Note that the Manager speaks of his actors as marionettes. This could therefore be a marionette play. And if it is performed by living actors, they should suggest marionettes. How? In what way would the movements of marionettes differ from actors' movements? Would you have them move exactly like marionettes, or would you give merely a suggestion of marionettes? Are some of these characters more distinctly puppet types than others?

It is extremely important in this play to get into the spirit of child-like fun. You yourselves must enjoy everything. Yet it must all be done with exaggerated seriousness. Absolutely nothing is so important as these absurd raspberry tarts.

The Manager is a very important, serious person. He is delighted with the importance of his play. His mission is serious: he is to correct an error which exists in the mind of the audience — that The Knave is a villain. He is delighted to do the audience this service. He is very courteous and desirous of putting everything in the best possible light. The humor of the characterization lies in eagerness to please while performing so tremendous a task. Note the humor of his lines.

Pantomime this prologue before giving the lines.

Blue Hose and Yellow Hose are every inch Cooks. Like the Manager they strongly suggest marionettes. But they are more than marionettes and more than Cooks: they are Artist Cooks. Blue Hose, it is true, is a somewhat nervous artist, while Yellow Hose is evidently an "arrived" and complacent one. He is quite the master of the important situation up to his amusing transition when he is reminded of the forgotten jam. "Zounds! I did!" His complacence does not immediately return, and though he scorns Blue Hose for his un-



easiness, his own teeth are fairly chattering. The artist spirit, however, returns during the tart-making, and great is the consternation of both cooks at the Lady's methods. Their joy at discovering the perfection of the stolen tarts is ecstatic. Bring out the solemnity of the moment — its dramatic suspense. Let the transition come slowly: ceremonious importance, suspense, uncertainty, delight, congratulation, tears of joy. It is a great moment! Remember that when the cooks have not the center of the stage their pantomime must never detract from the main action. Their entrances and exits can be beautiful examples of a good-humored, glorified self-importance, especially on the part of Yellow Hose. When the cooks have a speech in unison, as "Vinegar! Great Goslings! Vinegar!" be sure to break it. Note stage directions for bowing.

Go through the rôles in pantomime.

Pompdebile is what the English call "a silly ass." His constant endeavor is to be imposing. His sense of his own importance, coupled with his inefficiency as a ruler and his utter inability to understand Violetta produce a delightful comedy combination. His hurt dignity when she calls him "Pompy," or describes him as "pokey"; his horror at Violetta's lack of respect for the situation, and the impressiveness with which he gives his slightest command and refers to "ourself" are examples. His policy of slighting his own shortcomings is delicious.

Find a passage which illustrates each one of the above points. Pantomime first, then lines. Pantomime exits and entrances; finding Violetta's handkerchief; Pompdebile's rage at the Knave; eating the tarts; holding Violetta's hand; the final picture. What is Pompdebile's manner toward the Chancellor?

Would you make Pompdebile old or young? What would be gained by making him youngish? Is he entirely lacking in likable qualities? Does Violetta consent to marry him solely for the purpose of becoming queen?

The Chancellor is a sort of puppet Polonius, that is a musty, fusty, "tedious, old fool." When his pompousness is offended he becomes peevish and resigns. He is very feeble as an executive, and a staunch conservative, basing all his opinions on "the constitution." He is a terrific bore, and though he never has anything to say to the point, he is forever "putting in his oar."



Pantomime the Chancellor as he gives his lines about "chancelling." Give the lines. Pantomime him as he listens to someone else's speech.

How old do you make him? Why? What is his attitude toward Pompdebile? Violetta? the Knave? the cooks?

What is the only characteristic shown by Ursula? Remember to make her a *comedy* character. How? Pantomime her entrance. Do not overdo the comedy!

The Knave is the brains of the piece. Also he is the hero and a poet! And he has a sense of humor! Is he more or less of a puppet than the others? Has he the same vanity? Does Violetta find him attractive? Is he interested in Violetta? Find lines to support your answer. Does he understand Violetta better than Pompdebile does? Find lines to prove his intellectual quality; his resourcefulness. Must you lose comedy in this characterization? Where do the climaxes come in this rôle? Should he be interesting or handsome or both?

Violetta, of course, has very little of the puppet quality. The fact that she does not take herself nor anyone else seriously furnishes one of the comedy elements of the play. She is delightfully frivolous, changeable, careless, talkative, vivacious, frank, coquettish (but not too coquettish!) and charming. She has a childlike vanity, and an equally childlike frankness, which is shocking to Pompdebile and the Chancellor.

The part is full of transitions. Note three in the short speech beginning "Oh how good you are!" And three in the speech "Oh, I see. May I sit here?" Note her constant transitions in the scene with the Knave. Pantomime these, her scene after the exit of the Knave, her climax, her entrances, the making of the tarts, and the final picture. Is her faint real or assumed?

The characterization of the little boy with the jam is brief but delicious. It has simplicity, directness, and little-boyishness. Pantomime.

Characterize the Heralds.

Action is part of and must be developed along with character and feeling. Action which belongs to the plot alone is given in the stage directions.

For instance: The action of the Manager is suggested entirely by character and feeling until we come to the author's direction, "He



parts the curtains." But this must be done in character as only the Manager can do it, remembering the puppet quality of the play. So also "He claps his hands," and "He bows himself off the stage." Perform these actions in character.

The Pastry-Cooks are waiting for the main action to begin, so their business is purely mechanical, such as rolling out pastry rhythmically, one at each end of the table.

After the entrance of the king, the group around the throne should form a picture. In fact, every action should form a picture. Everyone, except Pompdeble, remains standing during the scene. The entrance of the six little boys should be very impressive. The boys should be puppetlike, with the exception of the boy with the jam, who is really a very human little boy.

The exit of king and train is as pompous as the entrance. It may be made through the audience if desired. Violetta and the Knave examine the tarts from opposite sides of the table. Violetta perches on the side of the table nearest to the throne when she cries; the Knave stands at the other end of the table; they come together at the center as Violetta cajoles the Knave.

When the Pastry Cooks open the oven door, does Violetta lean forward with excitement or cover her face with her hands? What does she do during the quarrel of the King and the Chancellor? At what point does Pompdeble reascend the throne? What is Violetta's action when she sees the Knave? Does she kneel when she pleads for him? What business by the Knave and Violetta during the sampling of the tarts? What is the business of the Knave between his Humpty Dumpty speech and his recital of the poem? What does the Chancellor do? Where is Violetta seated? Would you close with a curtain or have a ceremonious exit through the audience?

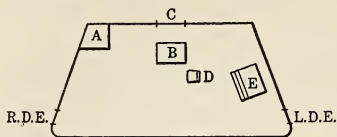
Take the scene between Violetta and the Knave as an example of gradually quickening tempo.

Use the entire play as an exercise in rhythm.

Your public library may have an edition of this play delightfully illustrated by Maxfield Parrish. Use these pictures as an inspiration for your setting and costumes. Do not copy. He has fancy, humor, and beauty in his illustrations. The same qualities should be in your set. Would you like an entire set done in black and white?



This might be the plot of your stage. Why is not the throne put at Center?



- A* — stove
- B* — table
- C* — casement window
- D* — chair
- E* — throne

This play may be done by a cast of girls.



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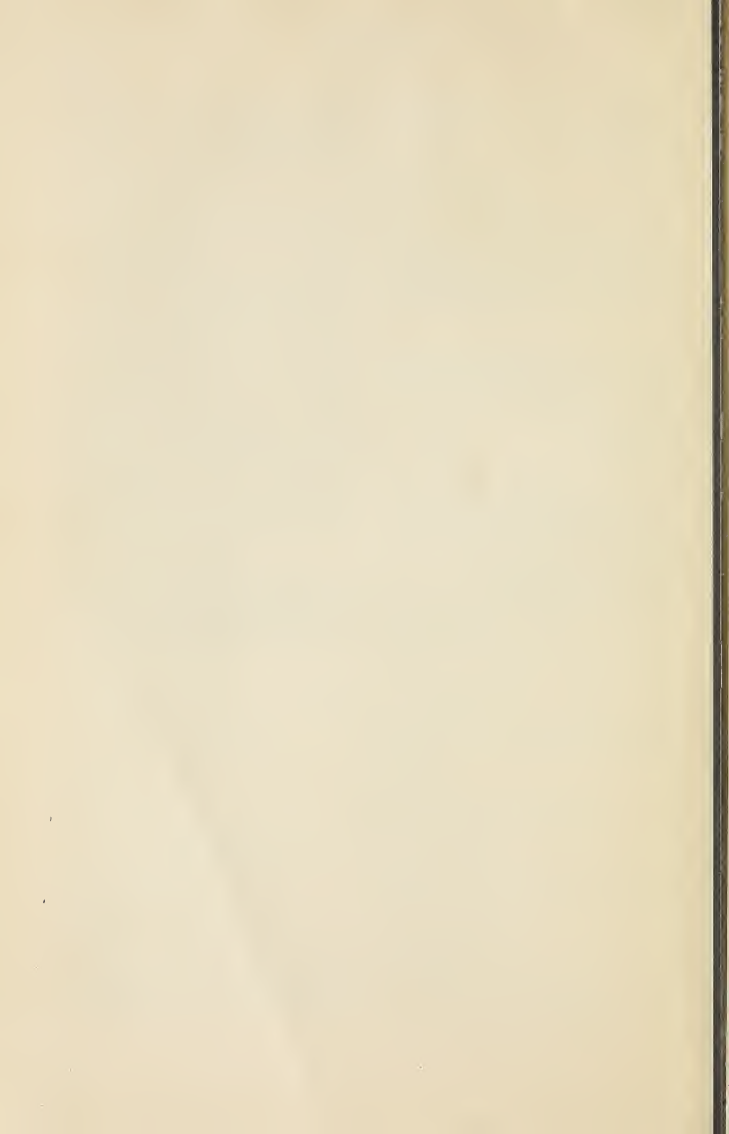
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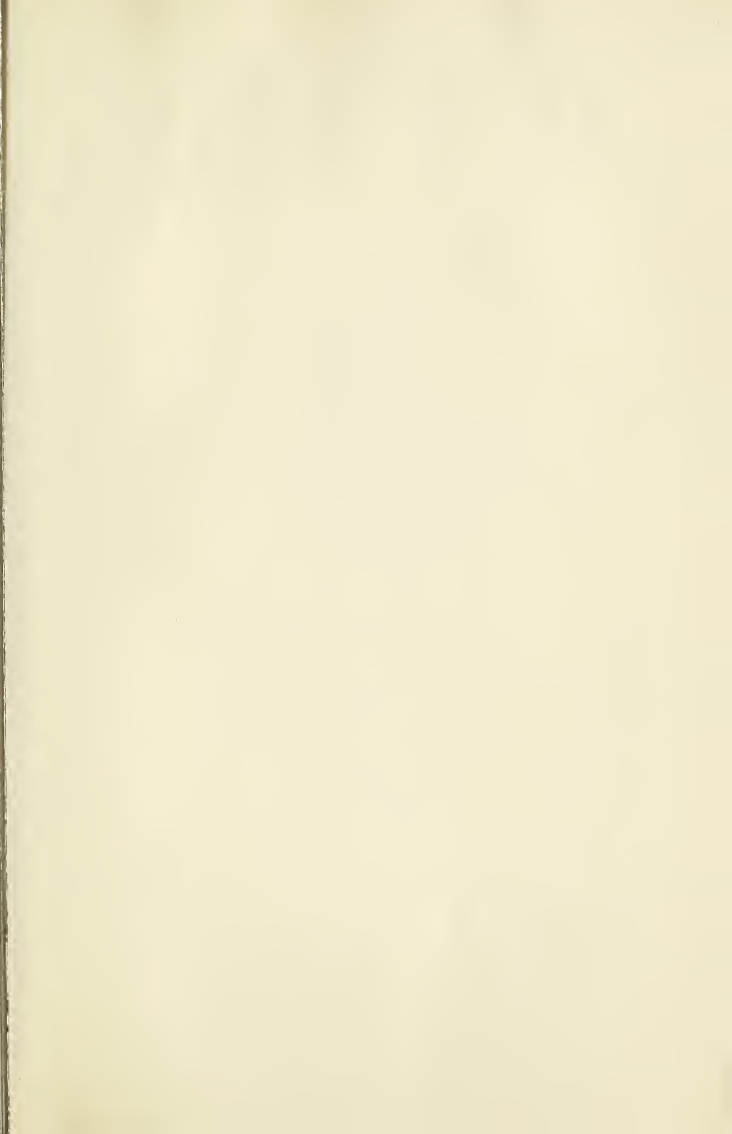
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